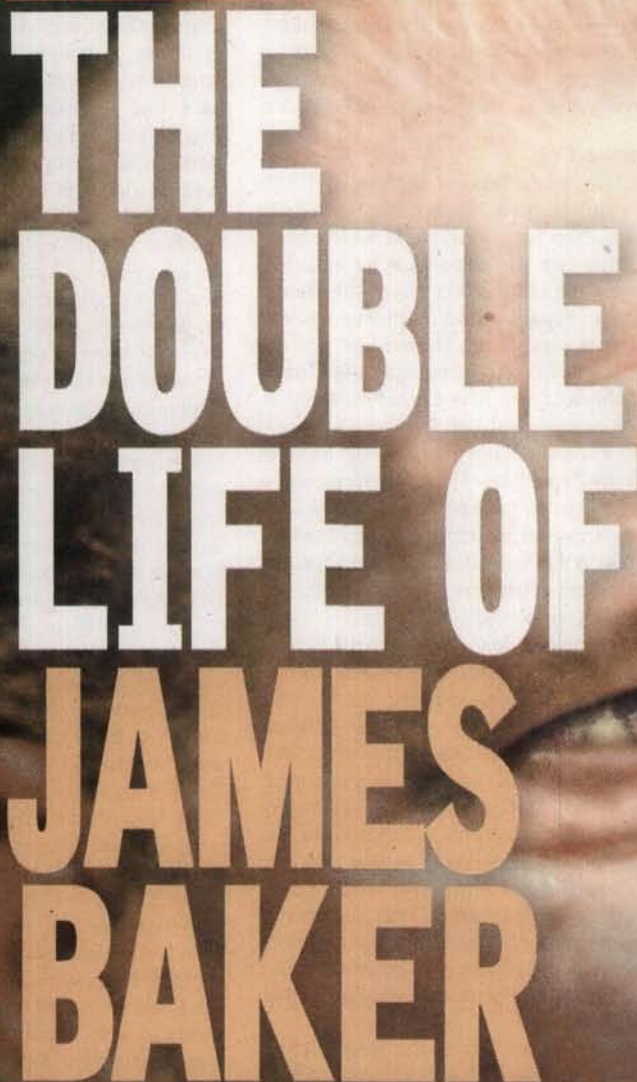


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SPECIAL INVESTIGATION



THE DOUBLE LIFE OF JAMES BAKER

THE REAL DR.
RANGELOVE
emy Bernstein

BUSH'S ENVOY HAS A PRIVATE INTEREST IN IRAQI DEBT

BXNKBXM *****

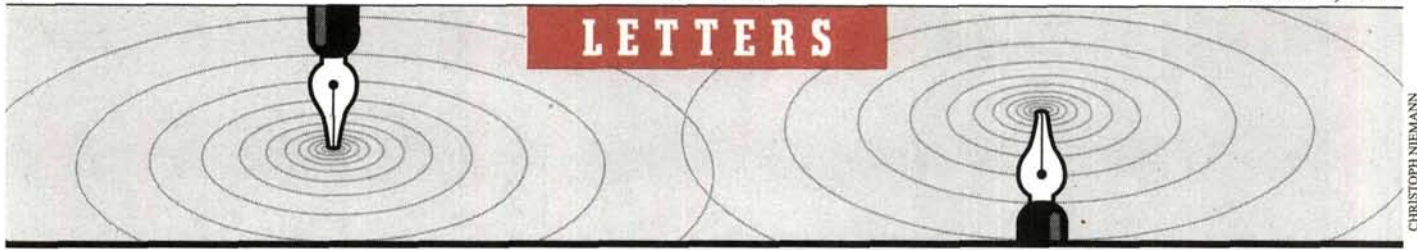
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CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

OUR (FORMER) ARAB FRIENDS

Tacoma, Wash.

Charles Glass does a masterful job of refuting Bernard Lewis's prejudices ["Lewis of Arabia," Sept. 13]. Glass tells us, "In 1957 the United States...was more popular in the Arab world than it is today." I know: I was there. We were not only popular; Arabs were crazy about us. At a dinner party someone might quote a line from our Constitution or Declaration of Independence. The boys in my high school knew more US history than the kids I had left behind in California—moreover, they cared about it. In their eyes, America had never been a colonial power, had been a colony itself, had thrown off the master and gone off to prosper like no one in history. They wanted to be like us. Even the little matter of Israel was something the wise Americans would settle to everyone's satisfaction. Some of my classmates were named Woodrow or Wilson in honor of an American President who had argued, in vain, at Versailles for Arab independence. America never had to beg, buy or fight for friendship. We had it—had it, ignored it, abused it and lost it.

I applaud Glass for calling Lewis on his complaint that "only the cities of Israel and Turkey are on the international concert circuit." Doesn't Lewis ever visit Arab nations? In Beirut in the 1950s we enjoyed visits by the New York Philharmonic, La Scala opera and the Bulgarian Folk Ensemble (which we could not have heard in the States). How many *Nation* readers know that there was an international film festival attended by thousands in Ramallah this past summer, that there was a Jerusalem festival that brought thousands to hear Palestinian and foreign artists in August, that there is a Palestinian National Orchestra? There are problems when string players from Bethlehem or the tympanist from Nablus are held up at checkpoints, but they do their best. Glass mentions the efforts of Daniel Barenboim and the late Edward Said to establish opportunities for talented young musicians from Palestine and Israel to perform together. A friend in Ramallah attended a concert by young musicians from this group in Amman, and another friend sent a copy of the program of *Al Fawanees*, a musical with lyrics by the late poet Ghassan Kanafani, music by composer Suhail Khoury, performed by some sixty young Palestinians in Jerusalem in August. Should Lewis make another visit to the Middle East, including Arab lands?

BERNICE L. YOUTZ

NADER: NOBODY'S 'IDIOT'

Eric Alterman hit the proverbial hornet's nest with his October 4 "Liberal Media" column on

Ralph Nader, titled "Bush's Useful Idiot." Huge numbers of Nader's supporters—calling the column everything from "spittle-flecked spew" to a "guilt-tripping," "vicious," "seething dismissal of Nader"—wrote to defend him. Some readers called Alterman's column "excellent," "passionate" and a good job. Below, the Nader/Camejo campaign replies to Alterman. —The Editors

Washington, DC

■ Eric Alterman's rabid depiction of Ralph Nader, calling him a "brazen liar," stoops to new lows, even for Alterman. If he left Manhattan once in a while, perhaps he would be able to distinguish the facts from the Democratic Party propaganda he dutifully recycles.

Alterman repeats the Democrats' Big Lie that the Nader/Camejo campaign is funded by the Republican Party. The Center for Responsive Politics reviewed our funding and found that only 4 percent of our major donors had also given to any Republican. These fifty-one people, many of whom Ralph knows personally from working on various issues together, gave a total of \$53,000 to the Nader/Camejo campaign, but from these same fifty-one donors \$66,000 was given to the Democrats!

If the overlap in donors between the Republicans and the Democrats were ever examined, there would be millions in donations from the same sources cross-giving to the political duopoly to hedge their bets and protect their influence. To suggest that because a few identifiable donors are Republican, the Nader campaign is somehow accepting funds from Republicans out of desperation, or that it should be monitoring each contribution with a political litmus test, is laughable. When Democrats and Republicans start rejecting contributions because a donor may have ever given to another party's candidate or political committee, then we will follow suit!

Alterman also points to the Republicans' gathering signatures for Nader's ballot access in Michigan, but he fails to tell the whole story: We seek the Reform Party's line in Michigan, and this requires no signatures. The campaign is still litigating to get that line, and we do not control what the Republicans do. Moreover, if the Republicans were so amenable to putting us on the ballot, why are we not on the ballot in battleground states like Oregon, Missouri and Arizona? We have told both parties repeatedly, publicly and loudly to get out of our way and stop entangling our campaign with their schemes.

Ignoring all this, Alterman desperately tries to shore up his "evidence" by citing the campaign's use of a Republican lawyer in Florida. Gasp! What is his point? What Alterman leaves out is that the Nader/Camejo campaign has

been in dozens of legal proceedings in some twenty states, compliments of the dictatorial, desperate tactics of the Democratic Party to deny voters the option of voting for Nader/Camejo. These harassing, phony and antidemocratic lawsuits have resulted in the need for dozens of lawyers of all political stripes. We have had Libertarian, Green, Independent, Republican and even Democrat lawyers. The Republican in Florida was paid, not pro bono. And we tried first, and often, to get the national and Florida ACLU to help us out, to no avail. But how would Alterman know, when he relies on inaccurate 527 group propaganda pieces or news clips rather than calling us or attending (or watching on CSPAN) our press conference, where we cited all this?

In the past four years it has become clear that Republicans will purge the voter rolls but Democrats will just move upstream to purge the ballot. Either way, voters suffer and the two parties, which collectively control the state machinery and the legislative requirements, may subject third parties and Independent candidacies of any strength to abuse because of a winner-take-all, anticompetitive, rigged election system.

Alterman then goes on to ignore, simply because it fits his narrative screed, the many contributions Ralph made to the embryonic Green Party, on whose behalf he did more than forty-five fundraisers in thirty states after the 2000 election. Indeed, many Greens credit Ralph with doing the most to grow the Green Party in the United States.

In the end, Alterman is reduced to begging for ideas to muster support for his distorted logic: "What in God's name," he asks, "will convince Nader's remaining supporters to abandon his lemminglike march?"

Isn't the answer obvious, Eric? How about a candidate who is not on the corporate dole; who wants a rapid, responsible withdrawal from Iraq; who will put forward a plan for healthcare for all now; who will advocate for a wage workers and their families can live on; and who will support the peace movement in Israel and Palestine rather than try to out-Sharon George W. Bush (see votener.org for much more).

Nader/Camejo supporters know what their vote means. They have not surrendered, like those who have abandoned their progressive agenda to make no demands on a prowar, pro-Patriot Act, pro-WTO candidate. And they are not willing to hold their nose, to give their votes away to a candidate who disagrees with them on the issues they care most about.

THERESA AMATO

Campaign manager, Nader/Camejo 2004

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EDITORIALS

Hammer Strikes—Out?

Has Tom DeLay—*aka* The Hammer—hit his last nail? Not yet, but the Republican House majority leader has sustained his own whacks recently for a series of unethical actions. Two reports by the House Ethics Committee outline several of the corrupt ways DeLay maintains (and abuses) power; they also show that the Congressional ethics system allows Representatives to escape serious penalties for improper acts that undermine democratic governance. Should a member of Congress be permitted to attempt to bribe a colleague, trade access for contributions, and use federal resources to mount a political vendetta? DeLay did all that, but the House Ethics Committee merely slapped his wrist.

The reports released by the committee examined four sleazy deals involving DeLay. In May 2003, when Democratic Texas legislators left Texas to thwart (temporarily) a GOP redistricting plan designed to enlarge the Texas GOP House delegation, DeLay's staff asked the Federal Aviation Administration to locate the legislators' plane in an effort to force them home to vote on the plan. In May 2002, as Congress was considering an energy bill, he held a golfing fundraiser at which he asked energy company execs what they wanted to see in the legislation. Last November, as Republicans were trying to pass Medicare legislation favored by George W. Bush, DeLay leaned on a GOP holdout, Representative Nick Smith, offering to endorse Smith's son in a Congressional primary if Smith voted for the bill. And in September, three fundraisers for Texans for a Republican Majority, a PAC linked to DeLay, and eight corporate PAC donors were indicted in Texas for

allegedly funneling illegal contributions to GOP state candidates.

In the committee's eyes, the FAA caper, the energy company fundraiser and DeLay's attempt to pressure Smith merited only an admonition. ("It is improper for a Member to offer or link support for the personal interests of another Member as part of a quid pro quo to achieve a legislative goal," the committee said in its report on the Smith affair.) The committee deferred action on the TRMPAC matter while it is in the Texas courts. This was all more protection than punishment for DeLay, whose reputation as a vengeful SOB will keep Republicans from publicly assailing him (or pressuring him to leave) unless his departure comes to be seen as inevitable. But his actions must have offended the GOP committee members for them to agree to any admonitions, even these inadequate ones.

The latest round of DeLay news is not shocking. In 1999 the Ethics Committee privately chastised him for threatening an industry lobby group for hiring a Democrat. DeLay has also invited corporate lobbyists to participate in the legislative process—as long as they have donated to the Republicans. He is the embodiment of the corporate-political cronyism of Washington. (For an example of this sort of corruption on a much grander scale, see Naomi Klein's article on page 13 about James Baker's conflict of interest between his role as Bush's envoy on Iraqi debt forgiveness and his role as senior counselor and equity partner in the Carlyle Group, which is part of a consortium aggressively urging Kuwait to hire it to insure that Kuwait gets every penny it can from Iraq.)

DeLay is—or should be—an embarrassment to the GOP. Public interest groups and Democratic partisans are justified in calling for a more extensive investigation of his mobsterlike conduct. He should be running from the law, not making it.

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Campaigner in Chief



As he began his seventh campaign swing this year through the battleground state of Wisconsin on a sunny day in late September, George W. Bush loaded a secret weapon onto his bus: Dr. Britt Kolar, a physician who played on the Yale rugby team with Bush in the 1960s. Seated at Bush's side as the bus rolled through Lake Geneva, where he practices, Kolar began feeding the President the names of people who were lined up along the side of the road and of small business owners who had stepped out to watch. "Hey, Mary," the President announced through the vehicle's loudspeaker system, "wish we could stop." "Hey there, this is the President. I hear you just opened your store. We're gonna help small businesses." On the President rolled, dropping references to local shops and restaurants and teams. It might sound hokey, but the crowds couldn't get enough. They were cheering themselves hoarse, and although the Bush bus never stopped in their community, they headed home talking about how the President of the United States had taken the time to talk to them personally.

For critics who have a hard time understanding why Bush—after all the revelations regarding his misdeeds in Iraq, after his mismanagement of the economy to the extent that he is the first President since Herbert Hoover to produce a net loss of jobs, and after his bungling of the first debate so badly that all the old questions about his IQ resurfaced—remains a viable contender, the answer is: the Bush campaign. And Bush is the campaigner in chief.

White House political czar Karl Rove is running the best-financed presidential campaign ever, one that is also doing a brilliant job of spinning the media. But the GOP's most effective tool is the candidate. "A lot of Democrats have a very hard time admitting this, maybe because they have never seen one of his rallies, but Bush is a very good campaigner," says George Lakoff, the Berkeley professor who has long argued against making the mistake of underestimating Bush's political skills. As in 2002, when Bush's energetic campaigning on behalf of House and Senate candidates, especially in the South, helped upset the traditional calculus that says the President's party loses ground in mid-term elections, he is campaigning with such determination and verve that it is not uncommon to hear backers like Beth Mueller, a 57-year-old Wisconsinite, describe his appearances in Racine as "electrifying."

Of course, John Kerry works hard on the campaign trail. Like Bush he uses bus trips to get in touch with the rural stretches of too-close-to-call states like Ohio, Pennsylvania, Iowa and Wisconsin. But the difference between the approaches of the two candidates is highlighted by the fact that Kerry often huddles at the back of his bus with aides. He is intimately involved with plotting the strategy of his campaign; he wants to be in on the discussion. Bush, happy to let others do the thinking, just wants to campaign.

Bush, who it is speculated will spend more time on the campaign trail this year than any President before him, and who frequently addresses more than 10,000 voters a day, clearly enjoys campaigning a lot more than he does presidenting. And why not? Everywhere he goes, he appears before congenial, generally pre-

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selected crowds, with the most loyal backers up front where the TV cameras can capture their cheers—and with tents full of phones at the rally site so the inspired can start making calls for the campaign as soon as the President finishes speaking. Those not likely to be so inspired are unwelcome at the rallies or near them. Frank Van den Bosch got busted for hoisting a sign that read “FU GW” as Bush’s motorcade passed through Platteville, Wisconsin. Nicole and Jeff Rank were removed in handcuffs from a Bush rally in Charleston, West Virginia, after revealing T-shirts with Bush’s name crossed out.

For the crowds that come to cheer, Bush puts on a good show. His open-shirt-with-rolled-up-sleeves look is calculated to convey the impression that while he and Kerry both may have attended prep schools and Yale, he is more of a down-home guy. Leaning against the podium, he laughs at his own jokes and struggles as much as ever with basic pronunciation, but he is never off-message. While his foibles convey an aw-shucks folksiness, he carefully follows a script designed to connect with the crowds: Evangelicals will hear a rant about “activist judges,” small-business owners a call for “tort reform.” And the rant is updated with each day’s talking points—for the crowds and, particularly, for the press. After losing the first debate, by the next day Bush was offering a version that had him winning—mainly by twisting Kerry’s reference to a “global test” into a refusal to defend the United States without the permission of Paris.

Observers who make the slightest attempt to analyze Bush’s statements see through them; the *Seattle Times* and the Portland *Oregonian* are the latest in a growing number of newspapers that endorsed Bush in 2000 but are now backing Kerry. But that’s of little concern to the Bush team; they’re more interested in direct contact with voters. They know that Bush the man polls better than the Bush presidency, and they’re convinced that the way to retain the White House is to rally the base personally. As in 2002, when the strategy worked better than Bush’s backers or his foes could have imagined, they will put their candidate in front of as many Americans as possible between now and Election Day.

JOHN NICHOLS

Climate, the Absent Issue

Every once in a while there is good news in this troubled world, and the choice of Kenyan environmentalist Wangari Maathai as this year’s Nobel Peace Prizewinner is one such moment. The timing could not be more apt. The choice of Maathai was announced near the end of a US presidential campaign that has resolutely ignored the greatest danger facing humanity, global climate change. Her selection thus stands as an implicit rebuke to the environmental backwardness of America’s political and media classes. It also represents an explicit assertion that, as the Nobel committee put it, “Peace on Earth depends on our ability to secure our living environment.”

The Bush Administration remains in denial about climate change even though its closest overseas ally, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, said in September that climate change is the single biggest long-term problem his nation faces. Blair’s top sci-

entific adviser, David King, has gone further, declaring that climate change is the biggest threat civilization has ever faced—bigger even than the global terrorism that dominates headlines and obsesses George W. Bush. King warned in July that there is now enough carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to melt all the ice on earth, which would put most of the world’s biggest cities under water, starting with low-lying metropolises like New York, London and New Orleans. “I am sure that climate change is the biggest problem that civilization has had to face in 5,000 years,” King said. Even Shell Oil chairman Ron Oxburgh admitted in June that he is “really very worried for the planet.”

Climate change is to the twenty-first century what the nuclear arms race was to the twentieth: the overriding threat to humanity’s continued existence on this planet. And it is already killing people. In the summer of 2003, some 15,000 people died in France from an unprecedented heat wave. No single weather event can be definitively attributed to climate change, but such heat waves are exactly what scientists expect as warming intensifies. If climate change is not moderated, more will die in years to come—either directly, through more destructive storms and droughts, or indirectly, through declines in food production and the spread of infectious disease.

Yet except for two brief references to the Kyoto Protocol during the Bush-Kerry debates, climate change has been absent from the presidential campaign. Kerry criticized Bush for walking away from Kyoto without mentioning that he himself also opposes the protocol (though Kerry pledges that, as President, he would reopen negotiations and fix what he considers its flaws). Bush sounded almost proud of having rejected Kyoto, which he claimed, incorrectly, would hurt the US economy.

Although parts of the media have woken up to the danger—*Business Week* and *National Geographic* ran cover stories on it this past summer—most US journalists still don’t get it. At best, they see climate change as just one of many environmental issues. At worst, they are still fooled by industry propaganda casting doubt on the science behind claims of climate change. Television networks approach the issue with a particular conflict of interest. As Robert Kennedy Jr. has observed, cars are the leading source of US greenhouse gas emissions, but car ads are the leading revenue source for US television networks.

Thus climate change remains marginal to the political debate in the United States. Public awareness and policy-making lag years behind the rest of the world, as the impending implementation of the Kyoto accord, without US participation, illustrates. (Now that Russia supports Kyoto, the United States and Australia are the only major industrial countries outside the protocol.) Some state and local governments are reacting; California recently required that automakers increase fuel efficiency 30 percent by 2009. But

ON THE WEB: Folksinger and longtime anarchist activist Utah Phillips has forgone voting for five decades as a considered political choice. But this year he’s decided he must register. Read Carolyn Crane’s interview with him to learn why (www.thenation.com).

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progress is incremental when it needs to come at hyper-speed.

Which is where the example of Wangari Maathai offers hope. The 64-year-old biologist is Kenya's assistant minister for environment and natural resources, but she has spent most of her life as a grassroots activist and critic of the former US-supported dictatorship of Daniel Arap Moi. Maathai's great innovation was to create the Green Belt Movement. This radical but practical program pays poor women to plant tree seedlings in their communities; 30 million trees have reportedly been planted since the program began in the late 1970s.

The selection of Maathai for the peace prize generated controversy in Norway from critics who said that honoring an environmentalist diluted the meaning of peace work. But that criticism was contradicted by a United Nations report issued a week earlier, showing how deforestation and water scarcity—which are exacerbated by global warming—have repeatedly led to armed conflict in Africa.

Maathai's Green Belt Movement is based on a holistic analysis of the intertwined problems of war, poverty, environmental degradation and lower status for women. (Kenya had one of the highest birth rates in the world when Green Belt was founded in 1977, in part because women thought their only option in life was to bear children.) Green Belt puts money in women's pockets, boosting

their independence and the educational prospects for their children. Meanwhile, the planting of trees replenishes the forests that are the foundation of Kenya's agricultural productivity and the primary fuel source for its poor. And thanks to photosynthesis, the new trees also fight global warming by absorbing carbon dioxide.

Like the best political ideas, Wangari Maathai's Green Belt program is specific yet universal, grounded in intellect but insistent upon action. Its underlying principles are the very ones needed to build a sustainable, and therefore peaceful, future: restoration of ravaged ecosystems, expansion of economic opportunity for the poor, a guarantee of equal justice for all and strengthening of democracy. The Nobel committee lauded Maathai for work that has transformed the lives of countless Kenyans. But her achievements also suggest how the rest of the world, including the vastly richer United States, can combat climate change, if only it wakes up and tries.

MARK HERTSGAARD

Mark Hertsgaard (www.markhertsgaard.com), The Nation's environment correspondent, is the author, most recently, of The Eagle's Shadow: Why America Fascinates and Infuriates the World and Earth Odyssey: Around the World in Search of Our Environmental Future.

Roe = Dred

Many viewers were puzzled when, toward the end of the second debate, George W. Bush answered a question about Supreme Court nominees by referring to the Dred Scott case. Why bring up the infamous 1857 decision, which declared that blacks could not be citizens and, in the notorious words of Chief Justice Roger Taney, had "no rights a white man is bound to respect," and which barred Congress from outlawing slavery in the territories? Perhaps, some wags quipped, Bush was trying to win black votes by coming out against slavery. Others suggested he was displaying his knowledge of Missouri history, or just being his usual garbled self—or maybe this was the only Supreme Court case he could think of. Here's the passage:

"Another example [of criteria for choosing Justices] would be the Dred Scott case, which is where judges years ago said that the Constitution allowed slavery because of personal property rights. That's personal opinion. That's not what the Constitution says. The Constitution of the United States says we're all—you know, it doesn't say that. It doesn't speak to the equality of America. And so I would pick people that would be strict constructionists."

Bush's language may be confused, but those who follow the anti-choice movement know that he knew exactly what he was saying: He was talking about abortion. As the blogger Paperwight puts it at <http://fairshot.typepad.com/fairshot/>, "Here's what Bush actually said: 'If elected to another term, I promise that I will nominate Supreme Court Justices who will overturn *Roe v. Wade*.'" If you didn't realize that, it's because you weren't meant to. The President was speaking to his base, in code.

Anti-choicers, who often compare themselves to abolitionists, have referenced *Dred Scott* virtually since *Roe* was decided. A Google search of "Dred Scott abortion [minus] paperwight"

CALVIN TRILLIN

A WHITE HOUSE SPOKESMAN EXPLAINS WHY THE DUELFER REPORT'S FINDING THAT IRAQ HAD NO WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION PROVIDES JUSTIFICATION FOR HAVING ATTACKED IRAQ IN ORDER TO RID IT OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Though all his weapons programs were
Abandoned and defunct for sure,
Saddam had weapons on his mind.
Since sanctions had him in a bind,
The man was forced to concentrate
On wily schemes to extricate
Himself from sanctions and postpone
His dreams of weapons all his own.
So sanctions couldn't have worked, you see.
Not clear to you? It's clear to me.

turned up 3,960 hits. Both decisions, they argue, denied citizenship, human rights and legal protection to a class of human beings wrongly characterized as property; both forbade legislators from correcting this injustice; both show the need to overturn immoral precedents, *stare decisis* be damned. That he was thinking about *Roe* explains Bush's odd characterization of *Dred Scott* as "personal opinion," which got him tangled up when he belatedly realized that—whoops—the Constitution didn't grant "equality to all"; it permitted slavery. "Personal opinion" is what anti-choicers think *Roe* is. "Strict construction" means overturning it.

When pro-choicers raise the alarm about the threat to abortion rights in a second Bush Administration, they get a big ho-hum from pundits, both left and right. Democratic candidates don't talk about abortion at all if they can possibly avoid it. No wonder voters are complacent—even young women seem to assume abortion will always be legal just because, for them, it always has been. But at the Friday debate Bush tipped his hand: Now we know that while millions of pro-choice voters assume Bush can't seriously want to overturn *Roe*, he is telegraphing to millions of anti-choice voters exactly how serious he is. The amazing thing is, he can pass his message to his base on national television, with every journalist in the country glued to the screen, and it takes a blogger to decode it for the rest of us.

For Bush, *Roe* = *Dred*. Spread the word. KATHA POLLITT

Reforming Three Strikes

In November, California voters will have their first chance in a decade to reform the state's "three strikes and you're out" law, which has imposed cruel life sentences on thousands for relatively minor crimes like drug possession, shoplifting and forgery. The law represents a human rights violation that most Californians not only live with but until now have enthusiastically embraced. At least twenty-three other states also have some kind of three-strikes law, but California's is by far the harshest. The first two strikes have to be serious or violent felonies, but, unlike in any other state, the third strike can be any of some 500 felonies, even so-called "wobblers," which can be prosecuted as misdemeanors. Regardless of whether the third strike is stealing a \$199 VCR or a brutal rape, offenders receive a mandatory 25-year-to-life sentence.

It's doubtful that voters would have approved the law had it not been for the passions surrounding the October 1993 kidnapping and murder of 12-year-old Polly Klaas. It soon became clear that her killer, Richard Allen Davis, had skated lightly through the criminal justice system. The three-strikes law was approved by the Democrat-controlled state legislature the following March and soon after affirmed by voters through a ballot initiative.

It is now clear that the law has cast far too wide a net. Today, nearly 7,500 inmates are serving life sentences under the law, nearly 60 percent for nonviolent offenses. Only 102 inmates have received life sentences on second-degree murder or manslaughter charges. By contrast, 357 inmates are serving life sentences for petty theft, 235 for vehicle theft, seventy for forgery and fraud, and 678 for drug possession—hardly the "career criminals

who rape women, molest children and commit murder" that voters were promised would be locked away for life if they approved the law.

But neither the Democrats in the legislature nor former Governor Gray Davis was willing to take the political risk of making even minor changes to the law. The main argument in its defense has been that it has lowered crime rates in the state, although there is no compelling evidence to back up that assertion. There are also disturbing regional and racial differences in how the law has been applied. San Francisco, for example, has handed out only thirty-two life sentences under the law, while nearby Santa Clara County has handed out 421—nearly six times the San Francisco rate. Black inmates, who make up 30 percent of California's overall prison population (but only 7 percent of the state's overall population), make up 45 percent of third-strikers serving life terms.

The most urgent reform is to change the law so that a life sentence is triggered only by a serious or violent felony. Proposition 66, a voter initiative on the November ballot, would do just that. Polls show that nearly 70 percent of Californians support the initiative, a remarkable shift in public opinion, driven in part by the state's disastrous financial situation, which in turn has focused attention on its bloated correctional system and its 163,000 inmates. The average expense to house an inmate in a California prison is \$31,000 a year. For a third-striker serving a life sentence, that comes to an average minimum cost of \$750,000 per inmate. Those costs will rise significantly as the three-strikes population ages.

Despite the benefit of hefty campaign contributions, including \$2.2 million from Sacramento insurance executive Jerry Keenan and \$150,000 from George Soros, victory for Prop 66 is uncertain. The main stumbling block is that the initiative goes beyond just requiring the third strike to be a serious or violent felony. It also would remove eight offenses from the current list of serious and violent felonies that now count as strikes. Residential burglary, for example, would only be classified as a strike if a house were occupied. Similarly, for an assault to be a strike a prosecutor would have to prove a defendant intended to inflict "significant personal injury."

Ideally those provisions should have been left to a later measure to deal with. In their present form they have galvanized opposition against reform, predictably led by the California District Attorneys Association, representing elected officials loath to give up any of their prosecutorial powers. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and Attorney General Bill Lockyer, a Democrat who is expected to run against Schwarzenegger in 2006, have together signed the ballot argument against the initiative, including a dubious allegation that it will flood the streets with as many as 26,000 dangerous inmates now serving "second strike" sentences. Even liberal San Francisco District Attorney Kamala Harris, who has come under fire recently for her decision not to seek the death penalty against the killer of a San Francisco police officer, is opposing the initiative. One of her key concerns is her belief that proving "intent" would make it more difficult for her to prosecute cases of domestic violence. A sign of just how muddled the debate has become is that Marc Klaas, Polly's father, is campaigning against it, while Joe Klaas, her grandfather, is campaigning for it.

The role of Keenan, by far the biggest contributor in support of

the initiative, has also become a campaign issue. Opponents argue that Prop 66 is simply an attempt by Keenan to free his 25-year-old son, serving an eight-year sentence for a drunk-driving accident in which two people were killed. But Keenan's son was not convicted under the three-strikes law. Although opponents claim that if the initiative passes, he could be released early for good behavior, it is not at all certain that the initiative would have any impact on his sentence.

It would be unfortunate if such side issues, or the imperfections of the initiative, were to subvert the imperative for reform. Because of California's importance in passing get-tough laws in the 1990s, Prop 66 would lead to a rethinking of three-strikes laws nationally, as well as strengthen emerging challenges to mandatory fixed-sentencing laws around the country.

The initiative also provides Californians an opportunity to cast a ballot on what kind of society they wish to live in: one in which inmates can be locked up for decades for committing minor crimes, or one in which punishment bears a rational relationship to the offense. No state's jurisprudence should be contaminated with laws more typically associated with countries the United States denounces as tyrannies.

LOUIS FREEDBERG

Louis Freedberg is an editorial writer at the San Francisco Chronicle.

Playing the Age Card

Alan Greenspan has recently been frightening Americans again, as he did in April, by threatening that Congress will have to cut Social Security benefits to fund retirement for "aging Boomers." In fact, the trust fund is solvent until 2042 and sloshing with surpluses. Manufacturing a crisis helps Congressional conservatives spill our precious contributions into the unquenchable stock market.

Given the data, where does Greenspan get his nerve? Why did NPR's Neal Conan, after Greenspan's earlier remarks, speak of "the remorseless arithmetic of what could be an impending budget disaster"? A friend of our son snapped, "I pay 15 percent into FICA, but Social Security won't be there for me." Why imply that this, if true, would be my fault? How can the right wing repeat disinformation endlessly and get verbal support from others who do not share their ideology?

What greases the skids is the innocent-looking practice of "Boomer-bashing." In case you haven't noticed, Armageddon will be the fault of the people born between 1946 and 1964. Since the 1990-91 recession, they have been cleverly vilified. A 1997 *New York Times* op-ed said that Crybaby Boomers "hate their kids." Pictured as essentially wealthy, self-righteous, unwilling to share their vast power and, of course, aging, they possess a not-so-mysterious grudge against photogenic "Generation Xers." A *Boston Globe* article described their craven autobiography: "idealistic longhairs" who became "yuppies" are now "ready for the glory days of the menopausal and the bald." "Boomers" are typically imagined as undeserving: techno-illiterate, overpaid, sexually failed, narcissistic. The urban myth is that a young person can find a job only if a (white, male) midlife person loses one.

Roz Chast in *The New Yorker* sardonically saluted "The Crummiest Generation."

Are "Boomers" rich? True, the age-wage peak now comes between 45 and 54 (not only for men but also, finally, for women and African-Americans). But each successive cohort of men 45 to 54 has been worse off financially. "Half or more of male workers lost ground as they aged from their 30s into their 40s, 50s, and 60s," notes economist Jeff Madrick. Midlife downsizing and outsourcing effectively gets rid of workers at the peak of their earning power. The results? Median income of men at their peak is only \$41,072 (2000 data). Median net worth of people 45 to 54, omitting houses, is an appalling \$23,525. In one survey, a third of those 50 to 59 who left a job cashed in their 401(k)s. Women 45 to 54 earn more than their mothers, but their dollar peak is still only 60 percent of men's. Declines often occur in the family life course when children are most expensive and parents begin to need care.

The term "Boomers"—or worse, "aging workers"—hides more accurate descriptors: The experienced. Long-term unemployed who have run out of benefits. The new reserve army of the under- and unemployed.

Age does dirty work nationally and for global capitalism. The Boomers-as-bosses, holding on to the good jobs, "explains" why working conditions are so degraded: insecure, underpaid, part-time or with longer hours, stressful. The Boomers' Social Security benefits, presented as if they will be more lavish than now, will mean "coming 'entitlement wars'" that "make the generation gap of the 1960s seem quaint," *USA Today* foretold. "Old people are coming! Old people are coming!" Misrepresented as a menace, Boomers have to be fought. Privatizing Social Security is one form of revenge. Boomers deserve "abrupt" cuts in government benefits, says Robert Samuelson in *Newsweek*. Force them to work longer. Cut "heroic" healthcare measures as they lie dying. "Generational accounting"—putting human relations as well as budgets in terms of "burdens" laid on the young—follows hard on the "alarmist demography" (as age critic Stephen Katz calls it). The neoliberal spin on age obscures long-term midlife declines, undermines seniority systems and respect for aging into the middle years, paralyzes intergenerational solidarity and ignores real sources of scarcity.

Age war means not having to admit class war from above or government's role in the starveling minimum wage, antiunionism, dangerous tax cuts for the rich, capital and job flights, NAFTA, CAFTA and the WTO. The decline of the working life course is going on in all the advanced capitalist countries, despite increases in longevity: It's the latest acceleration of the wage race to the bottom. Playing the age card, in short, diffuses what could be political anger and activism.

When Americans agree that we have an "aging" crisis rather than a capitalist one, they are thinking in right-wing terms. Partisan politics is trapped in our everyday attitudes and in jokes about "senior moments." Conservatives are left free to slyly play the age card, not only to try to privatize Social Security but across a range of issues.

Americans need to hear midlife people protesting, "We didn't eat the goodies; we've been helpless to save them. Middle-ageism

(Continued on Page 29)

Relaxation therapy for your feet

Visco-elastic foam has changed the way people sleep, now it helps the way you walk.

by Leigh Ligon

My feet hurt! How many times have you heard or said that...standing in line at the grocery store or simply while doing daily routine tasks? I feel like the older I get the more my feet ache. I've tried elevating my feet, soaking them in hot water and expensive massage therapy—but to no avail. That's why I'm so excited to tell you about my recent discovery—CLOUD 10 Slippers!

How did a NASA invention save my feet? From the moment I slipped them on, they molded to the shape of my feet like I had a custom fit pair of slippers made especially for me! The slipper's insole is made from visco-elastic memory foam originally created by NASA. This foam equalizes pressure, reduces stress and tension and provides incredible comfort.

According to the American Podiatric Medical Association, as people age, their feet tend to spread, and lose the fatty pads that cushion the bottom of the feet. Additional

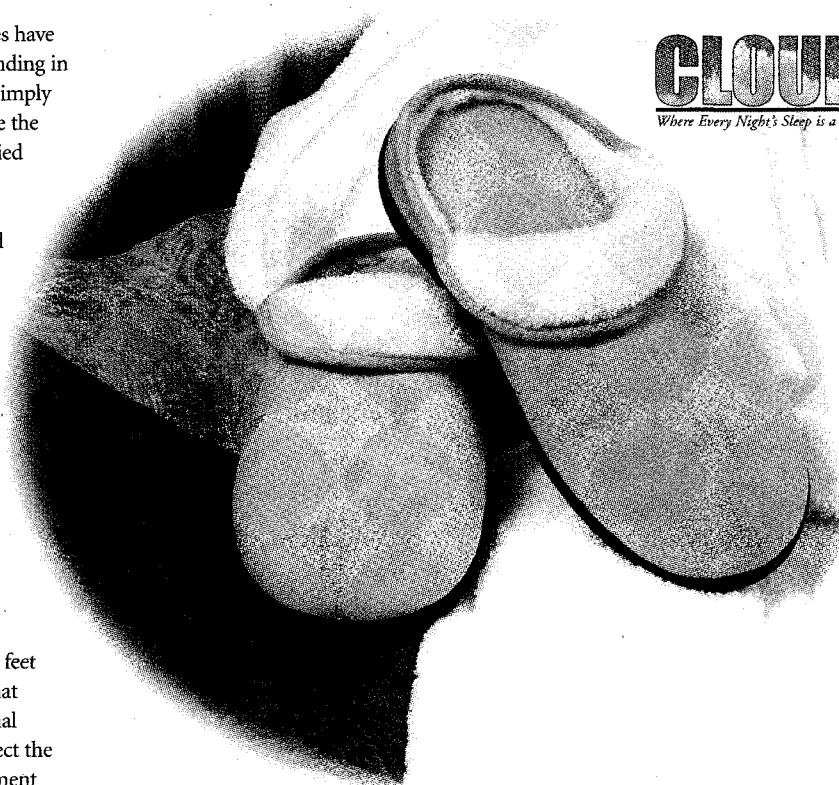
weight can affect the bone and ligament structure. These slippers mold to the contours of my feet through my body's heat and weight, literally cushioning every single step I take.

Did you know that the average person takes 8,000 to 10,000 steps a day, which adds up to about 115,000 miles over a lifetime? That's enough to go around the circumference of the earth four times. No wonder we all have tired, aching feet.

Technologically advanced slippers mold to the contours of your feet making each step feel like your walking on Cloud 10!

I've heard about similar kinds of slippers, but I couldn't afford to spend nearly \$70 a pair. The Cloud 10 Slippers were a much better fit for my budget. The outer material of these stylish slippers is beautiful tan faux suede and they feature a cozy, fleece-lined interior and collar to provide added warmth. The durable rubber sole is perfect for my quick trips outdoors to grab the morning paper.

CLOUD10
Where Every Night's Sleep is a Perfect 10



- ❖ Inner sole is constructed from visco-elastic memory foam
- ❖ Body heat molds foam to cushion feet for maximum support
- ❖ Super-soft, fleece lining provides added warmth
- ❖ Durable rubber sole—perfect for quick outdoor trips!

If you have arthritic feet like I do, you suffer from inflammation and pain in your joints. Our feet have to last a lifetime and I've decided

to stop neglecting the part of my body that keeps me mobile.

These slippers have a unisex design making them great for both men and women. I wear my Cloud 10 Slippers every chance I get and my feet have never felt so pampered.

Sink your feet into luxury. We are so confident that CLOUD 10 slippers will cushion your feet in complete

comfort that we will offer you a no-questions asked in-home trial for 30 days. If you're not 100% completely satisfied just return them for a full refund of the purchase price.

Call now to take advantage of this limited offer.

Cloud 10 Slippers

Unisex design — Small, Medium or Large
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Medium (Women's 8-10 and Men's 7-9)
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Tarantara!

Twenty months ago, when the Bush Administration was steering the country toward war in Iraq, we noted a parallel with another military misadventure, the Spanish-American War, in which Cuba and the Philippines were both invaded [see "An Imperial Moment," December 23, 2002]. A small group of unheeded dissidents, calling themselves the Anti-Imperialist League, warned against the war, which marked a sharp break with the country's anticolonial tradition. Now, as the war has dragged on, other surprisingly exact parallels have appeared. Some concern merely ridiculous or embarrassing events. Others point to long-enduring pathologies of American foreign policy.

The ridiculous shows up as crude jingoism. This time round, when European nations criticized American intervention in Iraq, the jingoes called for renaming french fries "freedom fries." Meanwhile, flags have become a fashion statement and a good way to promote sales. During the Spanish-American War, the superpatriots called for a boycott of imported fashions. Back then, too, France was singled out. "Patriotic Women," read an *Indianapolis News* headline, "They Will Not Buy Anything that Is Manufactured in France." Spanish-flag toilet paper went on sale, and business looked for other ways to capitalize on military imperialism. "The window dresser who is ever alert for novelty will not allow the disaster to the battleship Maine to pass without getting an idea out of it for a window display," the *Chicago Dry Goods Reporter* suggested to retailers in March 1898.

In those days, too, the prowar bias of the press had its critics and analysts. E.L. Godkin, founding editor of this magazine and an important press critic, observed that because public passions were easily aroused in foreign affairs, the press "made the moderate ground difficult for a diplomatist." Clearly, the influence of sensational, jingoist coverage on more balanced news outfits did not begin with the influence of Fox News over CNN and MSNBC.

Another aspect of coverage that has an uncanny similarity with today's is the influence of exiles on press coverage. In our day, it has been Ahmad Chalabi and members of his defectors organization, the Iraqi National Congress, who coached both the press and our government with bogus evidence on weapons of mass destruction. The Spanish-American War equivalent was the Cuban Junta, an exile group that orchestrated unfavorable news about the Spanish in Cuba. The Junta planted sympathizers on at least two journals, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* and the *Washington Star*, and spoon-fed stories to reporters across the country. The daily 4 o'clock Junta press meeting in New York was known as the Peanut Club. "No matter what the leanings of his paper," said Horatio Rubens, a New York lawyer who brought peanuts for reporters to munch on while collecting their news, "I know of none who was not personally sympathetic to Cuba in her trouble."

Not only the sensationalistic yellow press purveyed these stories. Many "respectable" organs of journalism provided made-up news. Among them was the *New York Times*, whose sins included an interview with a Spanish insurgent general. We cannot be sure the encounter took place, as many predecessors to Jayson Blair did their reporting from Havana hotel rooms, but the *Timesman* certainly used bogus quotes, to wit, "Tears were rolling down the

bronzed cheeks of the brave soldier as he proceeded. 'Go back and tell them, Señor,' he continued, 'that every Cuban patriot stands with breast bared for the foeman's steel.'" But soon an astute observer noted that this stilted boast had a startling resemblance to lines from Gilbert and Sullivan's then-popular *The Pirates of Penzance*: "When the foeman bares his steel, / Tarantara! Tarantara!"

The most disheartening parallel is that in both adventures, more than a century apart, the United States wound up at odds with the very people it promised to save. Cubans and Filipinos expected liberation. They got American occupation instead. When the Filipinos resisted, we used brutal force, burning villages, killing women and children. Gen. Frederick Funston, who won a medal of honor for his work, said the Filipinos who resisted American colonization were "an illiterate, semi-savage people, who are waging war, not against tyranny, but against Anglo-Saxon order and decency." After imposing a government, US proconsuls instituted an English-language educational system that airbrushed out the ugly facts of colonization. "To this day," wrote Philippine historian Renato Constantino in the 1960s, "our histories still gloss over the atrocities committed by American occupation troops such as the water cure and reconcentration camps."

Despite some restiveness, the Cubans mostly bided their time. In the meantime the United States took steps to incorporate the island into its economic system and passed the Platt Amendment. In Senator Platt's legislative handiwork, America reserved the right to intervene in Cuba's internal affairs. The law states, "The Government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty." Latin Americans had admired the United States throughout the nineteenth century. But by the time the US military government went home in 1902, the region was wary and fearful of its imperious northern neighbor.

The parallels are not unlimited. President McKinley was reluctant to go to war. He had served with the Union in the Civil War and understood the terrible bloody reality of battle. George W. Bush, so quick on the trigger, had no such experience. And it will not be so easy to rewrite history this time. America's foes increase and are better equipped to tell their side of the story.

One more point of continuity deserves mention. Through the Platt Amendment the United States gave itself a permanent base at Guantánamo. This is where prisoners of America's latest imperial enterprise have been held incommunicado. Guantánamo was chosen for its legal peculiarity. Neither under Cuban jurisdiction nor unambiguously under US jurisdiction, it was used by the Bush Administration as a sort of legal no-man's land for the incarceration and abuse of prisoners. Such was the gift, passed down from the early twentieth century to the twenty-first, of one American imperial campaign to another.

John Maxwell Hamilton, a former foreign correspondent and dean of theanship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University, is at work on a history of foreign reporting. Jonathan Schell is the Harold Willens Peace Fellow at the Nation Institute.

The Story of the British Museum, The Roman Empire and a UFO?

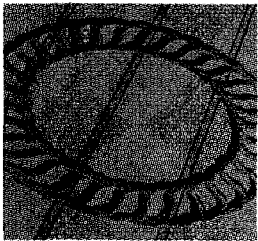
Not long ago, Thomas Cook was examining the strange and mysterious crop circles that had been cut into his farm in Lincolnshire, England. While trying to define the origination of these "extraterrestrial" aberrations, he made a discovery that was much more down to Earth. He discovered a hoard of Roman Empire coins in a buried earthenware pot that dated to 270 AD! It was a find of a lifetime. He didn't find any evidence of a UFO but he did find an amazing archaeological site.

According to English antiquities law, these coins were quickly taken into possession by the British Museum where they were studied and cataloged in the archives. The coins received a full "treasure trove inquest" by the museum.

With Museum Approval

The British Museum has allowed this offering to be made available to collectors since it has carefully studied and catalogued this amazing treasure. The British Royal Mint was fortunate to secure the last 4,993 of these rare Roman antiquities and is now releasing

these ancient museum pieces to the public. Each is an original antiquity minted when the Roman Coliseum was still used by gladiators so this is a rare opportunity to own a true piece of ancient history.

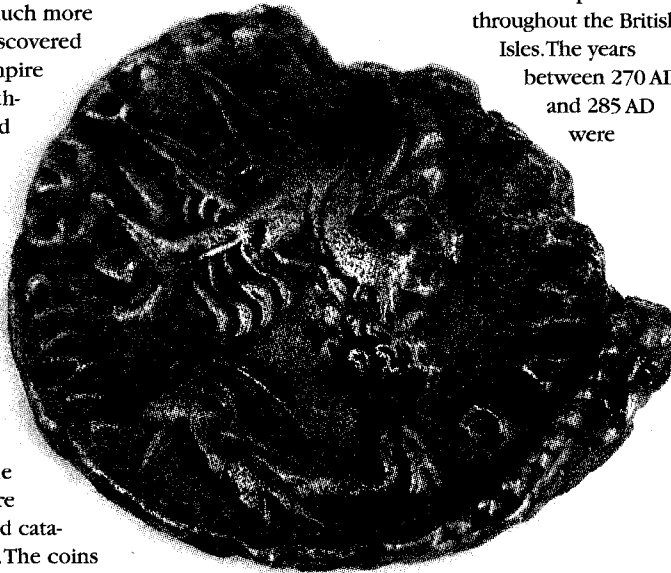


Discovered in earthenware pots while investigating a mysterious crop circle, the Roman Antoninianus Coins date back to 270 AD.

How did the Roman coins get to England?

The Roman Empire stretched throughout England. The magnificent Roman ruins in

Bath show how vibrant life in the Roman Empire was throughout the British Isles. The years between 270 AD and 285 AD were



marked by chaos in the empire with over 20 different emperors and 30 different pretenders fighting for power.

Only one of these leaders died a natural death so power in Rome proved quite elusive.

Diocletian Restores Rome's Greatness

These coins were probably buried during the reign of Emperor Diocletian between 284-305 A.D. This extraordinary Caesar brought back the glory to imperial Rome through his willingness to share power. Diocletian instituted broad economic reforms in an attempt to restore value to the currency. He created a new taxation system to finance the vast armies that held the empire together. Diocletian actually "balanced the budget" for the first time in Rome's history. If only today's leaders were so talented!

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ERIC ALTERMAN

Anchors Aweigh: The Refs Are Worked

At the opening of the Democratic convention, long before Dan Rather put a big bull's-eye on his back, Harvard's Joan Shorenstein Center for the Press, Politics and Public Policy hosted Rather, Peter Jennings and Tom Brokaw, together with Jim Lehrer and Judy Woodruff, to discuss the state of network news coverage before an audience of political and media luminaries. They had some interesting admissions to make about the effect of conservative media pressure on them, offering fresh evidence of the right's effective campaign to "work the refs."

Speaking of conservative media activists like L. Brent Bozell III, for instance, Rather noted that they are "all over your telephones, all over your e-mail, all over your mail," and it "creates an undertow in which you say to yourself, 'you know, I think we're right on this story, I think we've got it in the right context, I think we've got it in the right perspective, but we better pick another day...'" Next thing you know, the CBS anchor continued, "your boss or somebody on your staff will say, you know what, if we run this story we're asking for trouble with a capital T. Why do it, why not just pass on by? That happens—I'm sorry to report that happens. Now you can say that it is the result of fear, it's the result of not wanting to deal with the trouble of all those e-mails."

Tom Brokaw likened the pressures created by Bozell's "pressing of a button" to "a kind of tsunami.... He's well organized, he's got a constituency, he's got a newsletter, he can hit a button and we'll hear from him."

Peter Jennings concurred, adding that he sensed a degree of "anxiety in the newsroom, and I think it comes in part from the corporate suite." He identified "the rise, not merely of the presence of conservative opinion in the country, but the related noise being made in the media by conservative voices these days" and their "effect in the corporate suites." Jennings professed concern that the media were "perceived to be, I think, infinitely more liberal, by the way, than the newsmedia establishment is," and as a result, "this wave of resentment rushes at our advertisers, rushes at the corporate suites and gets under the newsroom skin, if not completely into the decision-making process to a greater degree than it has before." Jennings observed that "what the conservatives in this country have learned in the last ten years especially, is they feel they have to go to war against the networks every day.... Our job then is to be resistant to that—we should have been more resistant."

The anchors declined my invitation, issued from the audience, to ruminate on their own responsibility for the fact that a President of the United States was able to mislead the people of the United States based on what, even then, were demonstrably false arguments. Eventually, however, they did respond to the polite prodding of Patrice Arent, my favorite Utah state senator and the body's entire female Jewish caucus. Rather explained, "Look, when a President of the United States, any President, Republican or Democrat, says these are the facts, there is heavy prejudice,



including my own, to give him the benefit of any doubt, and for that I do not apologize." Addressing himself directly to the question of the networks' unwillingness to ask tough questions of Bush and his advisers before the war, Rather admitted, "When I referred to fear before, that's one of the specific things I had in mind."

Brokaw chimed in, "I think the big failure on our part was that we didn't connect enough dots on our programming.... I think we didn't raise enough questions about the political process.... it was our responsibility to at least put up more caution signs than we did. And I think, in fact, we didn't live up to that responsibility, in terms of generating more of a political debate about it." (Peter Jennings declined to offer any second-guessing of ABC's coverage on this score.)

Watching and listening, a part of me actually felt a bit of these multimillion-dollar babies' pain. Network news is getting hit from all sides. Their corporate owners are squeezing them at every opportunity to increase profits by simultaneously skimping on costs, pushing for "tabloid" stories and dumbing down what's left. Viewership is declining both in numbers and demographic desirability. The future is clearly with narrow-cast networks, like Fox's right-wingers and Jon Stewart's fake-but-truer-than-the-real-thing news, and these dinosaurs are hanging on to the Cronkite/Sevareid tradition by their magnificently manicured fingernails.

But they are doing so by offering surrender after surrender. While the above admissions do begin to scratch the surface of the networks' collective failure to live up to their democratic responsibility to hold our leaders accountable, they did not go nearly far enough. Jennings, for instance, proudly cited ABC's coverage of Colin Powell's February 2003 UN speech without noting that the speech, and hence the uncritical coverage, has been entirely discredited. And none of the networks were willing to take on the Swift Boat liars and the President's unwillingness to repudiate their slanderous untruths. In the wake of its momentous foul-up regarding Bush's still-unexplained absences from the National Guard, CBS decided to sit on a big breaking story it had about the President's false claims of Iraqi nuclear ambitions, lest its broadcast be perceived as helping the Democrats.

Meanwhile, following the Cheney-Edwards debate, for instance, Jennings & Co. were so eager to pronounce a winner that they went on the air with an instant poll that contained a 38 to 31 percent bias in favor of Republicans, a figure nobody believes to be credible but that allowed them to call Cheney the winner. None of these journalistic lapses would have gone unanswered if the left had matched the right's decades-long campaign to pressure the networks to report the news their way. Remember, this is not Fox News we're talking about here. (Fox declined the Shorenstein Center's invitation to the discussion.) These are the guys who are supposed to be the last defenders of media civilization against the barbarian invasion.

Welcome, Theodoric the Ostrogoth. ■

THE DOUBLE LIFE OF JAMES BAKER

When President Bush appointed former Secretary of State James Baker III as his envoy on Iraq's debt on December 5, 2003, he called Baker's job "a noble mission." At the time, there was widespread concern about whether Baker's extensive business dealings in the Middle East would compromise that mission, which is to meet with heads of state and persuade them to forgive the debts owed to them by Iraq. Of particular concern was his relationship with merchant bank and defense contractor the Carlyle Group, where Baker is senior counselor and an equity partner with an estimated \$180 million stake.

Until now, there has been no concrete evidence that Baker's loyalties are split, or that his power as Special Presidential Envoy—an unpaid position—has been used to benefit any of his corporate clients or employers. But according to documents obtained by *The Nation*, that is precisely what has happened. Carlyle has sought to secure an extraordinary \$1 billion investment from the Kuwaiti government, with Baker's influence as debt envoy being used as a crucial lever.

The secret deal involves a complex transaction to transfer ownership of as much as \$57 billion in unpaid Iraqi debts. The debts, now owed to the government of Kuwait, would be assigned to a foundation created and controlled by a consortium in which the key players are the Carlyle Group, the Albright Group (headed by another former Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright) and several other well-connected firms. Under the deal, the government of Kuwait would also give the consortium \$2 billion up front to invest in a private equity fund devised by the consortium, with half of it going to Carlyle.

The Nation has obtained a copy of the confidential sixty-five-page "Proposal to Assist the Government of Kuwait in Protecting and Realizing Claims Against Iraq," sent in January from the consortium to Kuwait's

foreign ministry, as well as letters back and forth between the two parties. In a letter dated August 6, 2004, the consortium informed Kuwait's foreign ministry that the country's unpaid debts from Iraq "are in imminent jeopardy." World opinion is turning in favor of debt forgiveness, another letter warned, as evidenced by "President Bush's appointment...of former Secretary of State James Baker as his envoy to negotiate Iraqi debt relief." The consortium's proposal spells out the threat: Not only is Kuwait unlikely to see any of its \$30 billion from Iraq in sovereign debt, but the \$27 billion in war reparations that Iraq owes to Kuwait from Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion "may well be a casualty of this U.S. [debt relief] effort."

In the face of this threat, the consortium offers its services. Its roster of former high-level US and European politicians have "personal rapport with the stakeholders in the anticipated negotiations" and are able to "reach key decision-makers in the United Nations and in key capitals," the proposal states. If Kuwait agrees to transfer the debts to the consortium's foundation, the consortium will use these personal connections to persuade world leaders that Iraq must "maximize" its debt payments to Kuwait, which would be able to collect the money after ten to fifteen years. And the more the consortium gets Iraq to pay during that period, the more Kuwait collects, with the consortium taking a 5 percent commission or more.

The goal of maximizing Iraq's debt payments directly contradicts the US foreign policy aim of drastically reducing Iraq's debt burden. According to Kathleen Clark, a law professor at Washington University and a leading expert on government ethics and regulations, this means that Baker is in a "classic conflict of interest. Baker is on two sides of this transaction: He is supposed to be representing the interests of the United States, but he is also a senior counselor at Carlyle, and Carlyle wants to get paid to help Kuwait recover its debts from Iraq." After examining the documents, Clark called them "extraordinary." She said, "Carlyle

by NAOMI KLEIN

and the other companies are exploiting Baker's current position to try to land a deal with Kuwait that would undermine the interests of the US government."

The Nation also showed the documents to Jerome Levinson, an international lawyer and expert on political and corporate corruption at American University. He called it "one of the greatest cons of all time. The consortium is saying to the Kuwaiti government, 'Through us, you have the only chance to realize a substantial part of the debt. Why? Because of who we are and who we know.' It's influence peddling of the crassest kind."

In the confidential documents, the consortium appears acutely aware of the sensitivity of Baker's position as Carlyle partner and debt envoy. Immediately after listing the powerful players associated with Carlyle—including former President George H.W. Bush, former British prime minister John Major and Baker himself—the document states: "*The extent to which these individuals can play an instrumental role in fashioning strategies is now more limited...due to the recent appointment of Secretary Baker as the President's envoy on international debt, and the need to avoid an apparent conflict of interest.*" [Emphasis in original.] Yet it goes on to state that this will soon change: "*We believe that with Secretary Baker's retirement from his temporary position [as debt envoy], that Carlyle and those leading individuals associated with Carlyle will then once again be free to play a more decisive role...*"

Chris Ullman, vice president and spokesperson for Carlyle, said that "neither the Carlyle Group nor James Baker wrote, edited or authorized this proposal to the Kuwait government." But he acknowledged that Carlyle knew a proposal was being made to the government of Kuwait and that Carlyle stood to land a \$1-billion investment. "We were aware of that. But we played no role in procuring that investment."

Asked if Carlyle was "willing to take the billion but not to try to get it," Ullman answered, "Correct."

Iraq is the most heavily indebted country in the world, owing roughly \$200 billion in sovereign debts and in reparations from Saddam's wars. If Iraq were forced to pay even a quarter of these claims, its debt would still be more than double its annual GDP, severely undermining its capacity to pay for reconstruction or to address the humanitarian needs of its war-ravaged citizens. "This debt endangers Iraq's long-term prospects for political health and economic prosperity," President Bush said when he appointed Baker last December.

But critics expressed grave concern about whether Baker was an appropriate choice for such a crucial job. For instance, one of Iraq's largest creditors is the government of Saudi Arabia. The Carlyle Group does extensive business with the Saudi royal family, as does Baker's law firm, Baker Botts (which is currently defending them in a \$1 trillion lawsuit filed by the families of September 11 victims). The *New York Times* determined that the potential conflicts of interest were so great that on December 12 it published an

editorial calling on Baker to resign his posts at the Carlyle Group and Baker Botts to preserve the integrity of the envoy position.

"Mr. Baker is far too tangled in a matrix of lucrative private business relationships that leave him looking like a potentially interested party in any debt-restructuring formula," stated the editorial. It concluded that it wasn't enough for Baker to "forgo earnings from clients with obvious connections to Iraqi debts.... To perform honorably in his new public job, Mr. Baker must give up these two private ones."

The White House brushed off calls for Baker to choose between representing the President and representing Carlyle investors. "I don't read those editorials," President Bush said when asked by a reporter about the *Times* piece. Bush assured reporters that "Jim Baker is a man of high integrity.... We're fortunate he decided to take time out of what is an active life...to step forward and serve America." Carlyle was equally adamant: Chris Ullman assured a Knight-Ridder reporter that

The goal of maximizing Iraq's debt payments directly contradicts the US foreign policy aim of drastically reducing Iraq's debt burden.

Baker's post "will have no impact on Carlyle whatsoever."

In fact, several months earlier, on July 16, 2003, Carlyle had attended a high-level London meeting with Kuwaiti officials about the deal. According to the document, the Kuwaitis asked Carlyle and the other consortium members to "prepare a detailed financial proposal for the protection and monetization" of reparation debts from Iraq. But at the time Baker was appointed envoy, the consortium had not yet submitted its proposed plans to Kuwait. That means that the Carlyle Group could have pulled out of the consortium, citing the potential conflicts of interest. Instead, Carlyle stayed on, and the consortium proceeded to use Baker's powerful new position to aggressively pitch a deal that positioned the consortium as the Kuwaiti government's chief lobbyist on Iraq's debts and that gave Carlyle a clear stake in the fate of Iraq's debts.

However, several changes were made in the way the consortium presented itself. The documents state, "Prior to [Baker's] appointment [former US Secretary of Defense Frank] Carlucci had played a convening and guiding role on behalf of Carlyle." But after the appointment, according to Carlyle's Chris Ullman, the firm's role was scaled back. "When James Baker was named special envoy...Carlyle explicitly restricted its role to only investing assets on behalf of Kuwait." Shahameen Sheikh, chairman and CEO of International Strategy Group, a company created by the consortium to manage this deal, said that Carlyle told her that "they are not a lobbying firm." Days before Baker's appointment, the consortium reached out to another high-profile Washington firm, the Albright Group, which eventually signed on as the leading political strategists and lobbyists for the consortium.

Moreover, Ullman said that Carlyle put "controls in place" that would insure that Baker "would play no role in nor benefit from" the proposed \$1 billion investment—an amount that would constitute nearly 10 percent of Carlyle's total equity investments.

But it's not clear that Carlyle has been straightforward about its dealings so far. The day before Baker's appointment was announced, John Harris, managing director and chief financial officer of Carlyle, submitted a signed statement to White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales. "Carlyle does not have any investment in Iraqi public or private debt," he wrote. He didn't mention that

Nation columnist Naomi Klein is the author of *No Logo* (Picador). Support provided by The Nation Institute's Investigative Fund.

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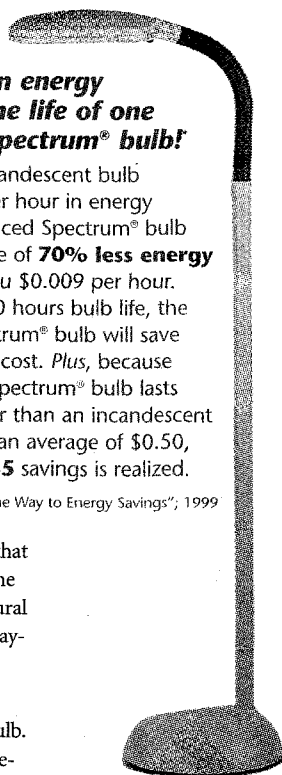
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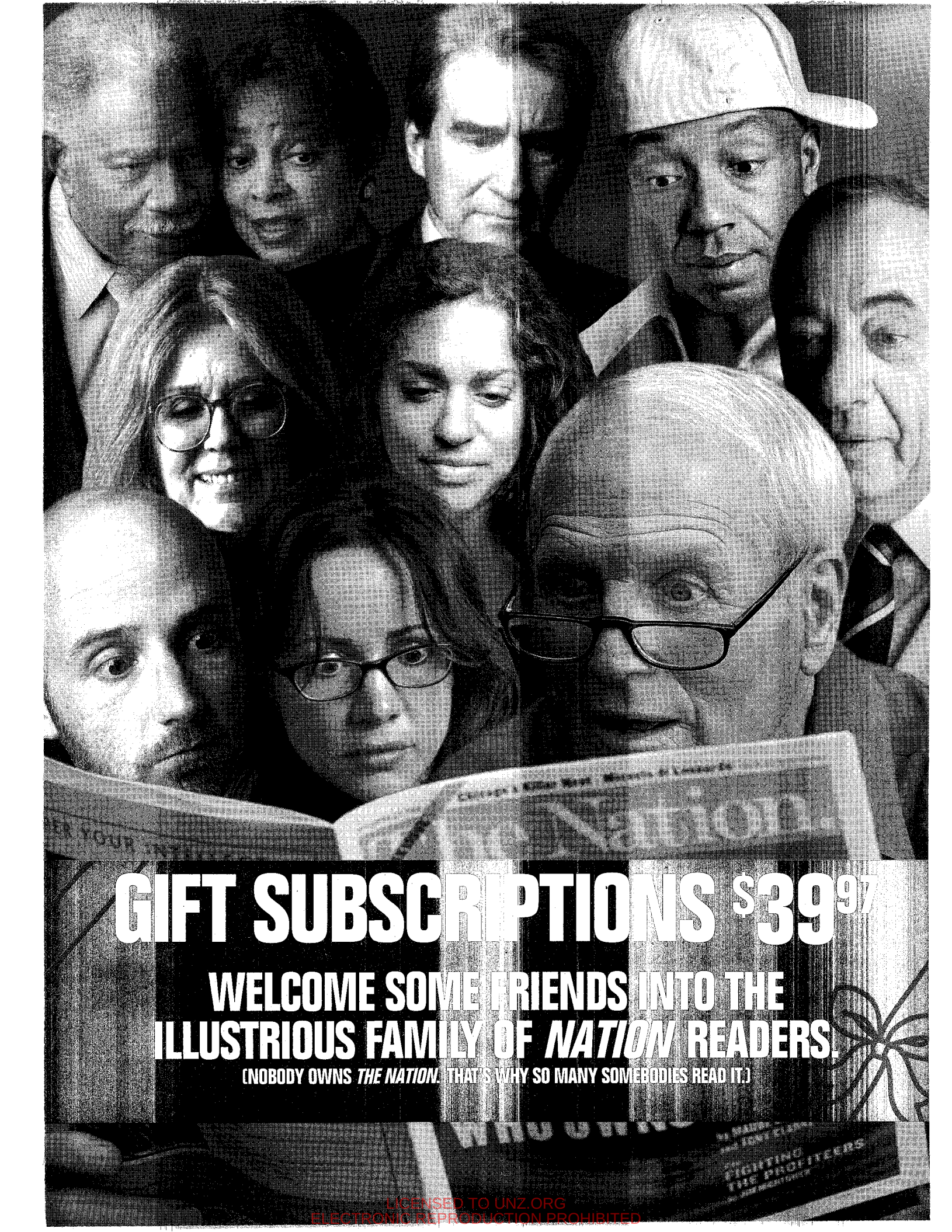
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Carlyle had for months been in negotiations with Kuwait to help secure its unpaid war debts from Iraq. Asked if the White House had been informed of the Carlyle Group's dealings with Kuwait at any point, Ullman replied, "I'll get back to you on that." He did not.

According to Kathleen Clark, it is unclear whether Baker is complying with the criminal statute and administrative regulations that prohibit government officials from participating in government business in which they have a financial interest—including matters that affect an outside company that employs the official. Clark notes, "even if Baker is somehow being screened from profiting from this deal, Carlyle is using Baker's government position to benefit themselves." She says it's time for Carlyle and the White House to come clean. "There's a tremendous need for transparency here." The White House and James Baker's office did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Baker occupies a complicated place in the consortium's January proposal—he is both problem and solution, stick and carrot. In the documents, Baker's name comes up repeatedly, usually in tones of high alarm. "Mr. Baker's new role and the likely emergence of what will be understood as a new round of global negotiations over Iraqi debt—casts all of these issues in a new light and gives them a new, perhaps even intense, sense of urgency," states a letter signed by Madeleine Albright; David Huebner, chairman of the Coudert Brothers law firm (another consortium member); and Shahameen Sheikh.

But after establishing Baker's envoy job as the embodiment of the threat that Kuwait will lose its reparations payments, the proposal goes on at length about the powerful individuals connected to the consortium who will "have the ability to gain access to the highest levels of the United States Government and other Security Council governments for a hearing of Kuwait's views." According to Levinson, "What they are proposing is to completely undercut Baker's mission—and they are using their connection with Baker to do it."

On January 21, 2004, James Baker's dual lives converged. That morning Baker flew to Kuwait as George Bush's debt envoy. He met with Kuwait's prime minister, its foreign minister and several other top officials with the stated goal of asking them to forgive Iraq's debts in the name of regional peace and prosperity.

Baker's colleagues in the consortium chose that very same day to hand-deliver their proposal to Foreign Minister Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah—the same man Baker was meeting. The proposal "takes into account the new dynamics that have developed in the region," states the cover letter, signed by Albright, Huebner and Sheikh—dynamics that include "Secretary Baker's negotiations" on debt relief. If Kuwait accepts the consortium's offer, they explain, "we will distinguish Kuwait's claims—legally and morally—from the sovereign debt for which the United States is now seeking forgiveness."

Was it a coincidence that the consortium submitted its proposal on the same day Baker was in Kuwait? And which James Baker were Kuwait's leaders supposed to take more seriously—the presidential envoy calling for debt forgiveness or the busi-

nessman named in the proposal as a potential ally in their quest for debt payment?

Ahamed al-Fahad, under secretary to the prime minister of Kuwait, told *The Nation*, "I have seen it [the proposal] and I am fully aware of the situation." But when asked about Baker's dual role in Kuwait, he said, "It's hard to comment on that issue, especially now. I hope you fully understand."

Shahameen Sheikh, the consortium head who made the delivery, says the timing was a coincidence. "It had nothing to do with Mr. Baker's visit.... I was in the region so I thought I would stop over on the way to Europe and deliver the proposal."

We do know this: After meeting with Baker on January 21, Kuwait's foreign minister told reporters that Baker had shown "understanding of Kuwait's position on war reparations," confirming that the subject did come up. He also said that while sovereign debt might be forgiven, reparations would not, because "there is an international decision from the UN."

Three days later, when Baker was back in Washington giving a

speech, he made this distinction for the first time. "My job is to deal with Iraqi debt to sovereign creditors, not with war reparations," he said. He also echoed the exact line of

the Kuwaiti government: that reparations are outside his purview because they are "under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Security Council and subject to resolutions it has passed."

This was a curious statement: Why would such a large portion of Iraq's debts be off the table? It also seemed to contradict other things Baker said in the same speech. He said that "any reduction [in Iraq's debt] must be substantial, or a vast majority of the total debt." That is impossible without addressing reparations, which by some measures account for more than half of Iraq's foreign debts. The Center for Strategic and International Studies, the center-right think tank hosting Baker's speech, has said it is "unwise" to make any debt relief plan "that does not include reparations."

Baker's statement on reparations also placed him at odds with several other members of the Bush Administration, including former chief envoy to Iraq Paul Bremer. "I think there needs to be a very serious look at this whole reparations issue," Bremer said in September 2003. He compared the Iraq situation to that of Germany after World War I, when the 1921 Reparations Commission forced the Weimar Republic to pay \$33 billion. The massive reparations "contributed directly to the morass of unrest, instability and despair which led to Adolf Hitler's election," Bremer warned.

Yet Iraq continues to make regular reparations payments for Saddam's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. In the eighteen months since the US invasion, Iraq has paid out a staggering \$1.8 billion in reparations—substantially more than the battered country's 2004 health and education budgets combined, and more than the United States has so far managed to spend in Iraq on reconstruction.

Most of the payments have gone to Kuwait, a country that is about to post its sixth consecutive budget surplus, where citizens have an average purchasing power of \$19,000 a year. Iraqis, by contrast, are living on an average of just over \$2 a day, with most of the population dependent on food rations for basic nutrition. Yet reparations payments continue, with Iraq scheduled to make another \$200 million payout in late October.

Baker occupies a complicated place in the consortium's proposal—he is both problem and solution, stick and carrot.

This arrangement dates back to the end of the first Gulf War. As a condition of the cease-fire, Saddam Hussein agreed to pay for all losses incurred as a result of his invasion and seven-month occupation of Kuwait. Payments started flowing in 1994 and sped up in 1996, with the start of the UN's oil-for-food program. According to UN Security Council Resolution 986, which created the program, Iraq could begin to export oil as long as the revenue was spent on food and medicine imports, and as long as 30 percent of Iraq's oil revenues went to the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC), the Geneva-based quasi-tribunal in charge of Gulf War reparations.

Some of the claims that have been awarded by the UNCC are huge: the cost of cleaning up Kuwait's and Saudi Arabia's coastlines from oil spills and fires, or the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's controversial award for \$15.9 billion in lost oil revenues. So far, the UNCC has paid out \$18.6 billion in war reparations and has awarded an additional \$30 billion that has not been paid because of Iraq's shortage of funds. There are still \$98 billion worth of claims before the UNCC that have yet to be assessed, so these numbers could rise steeply. That's why there are no accurate estimates of how much Iraq owes in war reparations—the figure ranges from \$50 billion to \$130 billion.

But the fate of these debts is now highly uncertain. On May 22, 2003—two months after the United States invaded Iraq—the Security Council decided to cut the percentage of Iraqi oil revenues going to war reparations to 5 percent. This past May, an Iraqi delegation went to the UN to ask for the percentage to be reduced even further, to accommodate Iraq's own reconstruction needs. There is growing sympathy for this position. Justin Alexander of the debt relief group Jubilee Iraq says that many of the claims before the UNCC are inflated and that “even for genuine claims, this is Saddam's responsibility, not the Iraqi people's, who themselves suffered far more than anyone.”

This is where the Carlyle/Albright consortium comes in. The premise of its proposal is that Iraq's unpaid debts to Kuwait are not just a financial problem but a political and public relations problem as well. Global public opinion is no longer what it was when Kuwait was promised full reparations. Now the world is focused on reconstructing Iraq and forgiving its debts. If Kuwait is going to get its reparations awards, the cover letter argues, it will need to recast them not as a burden on Iraq but “as a key element in working toward regional stability and reconciliation.”

Several parties involved in the consortium emphasized that the proposal concerned only reparations debts. Albright Group spokesperson Jamie Smith said, “We were asked to join a proposal to secure justice for victims of Saddam's invasion of Kuwait and ensure that compensation to Kuwaiti victims—which was endorsed by the US government and the United Nations—be used to promote reconciliation, environmental improvements and investment in Kuwait, Iraq and the region.”

In fact, the proposal does not restrict itself to reparations debt. The consortium also asks the government of Kuwait to give the consortium control over \$30 billion in defaulted sovereign debts to be used as political leverage to secure reparations claims. Furthermore, most experts on debt restructuring agree that Iraq's debts must be looked at as a whole: There is little point forgiving Iraq's sovereign debts if the country is still going to be saddled with an

unmanageable reparations burden. This understanding is reflected in the documents, which repeatedly state that Kuwait's reparations payments are endangered by the moves to forgive Iraq's debts.

To avert this threat to Kuwait, the consortium proposes a three-pronged strategy of aggressive backroom lobbying, clever public relations and creative investing and financing. “Any solution for payment of the Unpaid Awards...must be politically sellable as reinforcing stability and growth in the Gulf and in Iraq. This Proposal provides the strategy, the architecture, and the talent to achieve this goal,” the document states.

Lobbying: Since the UNCC exists entirely at the discretion of the Security Council, which can vote to reduce, suspend or eliminate reparations at any time, the part of the proposal dealing with power-brokering is straightforward: It suggests a full-on lobbying offensive directed at Security Council members, using Albright's connections, but also other “eminent” people associated with the consortium like former US Senator Gary Hart and former US ambassador to the UN Jeane Kirkpatrick. “We will first seek to preserve the five percent of the revenues from Iraqi oil allocated as funding for payment of the UNCC awards,” the proposal says. To achieve this, the consortium will make “discreet contacts at top levels in key capitals of Security Council member states and with influential representatives,” and “interventions with United Nations senior staff to shape presentations to the Security Council.” The proposal further notes that “Germany and Romania may be pivotal, and The Albright Group has very close ties to each.”

Public Relations: The consortium also has a detailed plan to address the perception that reparations are “diverting resources from rebuilding Iraq to a more wealthy neighbor.” First, Kuwait must assign its unpaid debts from Iraq to a private foundation controlled by the consortium. The foundation will manage an investment fund that will invest a portion of reparations payments from Iraq to Kuwait back into Iraq. As examples of the types of investments the foundation would make, Albright, Huebner and Sheikh suggest in their letter that the reparations funds could be used to buy Iraq's state-owned companies. “In the near future, 40 state-owned Iraqi enterprises in a range of sectors will be available for leasing and management contracts,” they write. By demonstrating that Kuwait is investing part of its reparations proceeds back into Iraq's economy, the consortium-run foundation “establishes a humanitarian rationale for the United States and other countries to continue their support” for the reparations. The consortium appears to see privatization—a highly controversial proposal in Iraq—as part of a humanitarian mission.

The proposal also suggests more direct public relations strategies. It calls for Kuwait to dedicate \$1 billion of the reparations awards it has already been paid by the UNCC to a Kuwait Environmental Restoration Fund, which the consortium would create. The purpose of this fund would be to remind the world of “the gravity of the environmental legacy facing Kuwait” and to “position Kuwait as the region's environmental leader.” The fund would be headed by Carol Browner, former head of the US Environmental Protection Agency and a principal in the Albright Group.

Investment/Financing: The proposal predicts that on their own, lobbying and PR will not be sufficient to secure the amounts that the Kuwaiti government hopes to receive in reparations. For the consortium to “maximize the value of Kuwait's compensation,” Kuwait will have to part with even more of the reparations

payments it has received. In addition to the \$1 billion for the environmental fund, the proposal calls for another \$2 billion of Kuwaiti money to be invested in a Middle East Private Equity Fund. Of that \$2 billion, "\$1 billion would be invested, by way of special agreement, in The Carlyle Group equity funds" for a period of at least twelve to fifteen years. At the end of that period Kuwait will get the return on these investments, as well as whatever the consortium has been able to negotiate in reparations payments.

For the consortium, it is an excellent deal: Its members get to manage a \$2 billion investment portfolio, collecting healthy management fees as well as a percentage of interest. They also will be paid a "retainer" and 5 percent of any debts the consortium gets repaid, and "a negotiated percentage of the value returned to Kuwait exceeding" the pre-arranged amount.

Other consortium members sharing in these benefits include Fidelity Investments; BNP Paribas, a European bank embroiled in the oil-for-food scandal; Gaffney, Cline & Associates, an energy company specializing in oil and gas privatization; Nexgen Financial Solutions, a financial engineering firm partly owned by the government of France; and Emerging Markets Partnership, an AIG affiliate headed by a former senior vice president of the World Bank, Moeen Qureshi.

In addition to the financial windfall, the arrangement would give this group of private companies tremendous power. Whoever holds Iraq's debt has the ability to influence policy in Iraq at a moment of extreme political uncertainty. Yet for the government of Kuwait the proposed deal is fraught with risk. It's true that the fate of its Iraqi reparations looks grim. The consortium estimated that if Kuwait tried to sell those debts on the market, its \$27 billion would be worth only \$1.5 billion. But the consortium is asking Kuwait to risk \$3 billion of reparations money it has already received in the hope that it can be used to leverage some of the rest. However, as Jerome Levinson points out, "There are absolutely no guarantees of even that."

It is clear that the consortium is extremely eager to seal a deal with Kuwait. Consortium CEO Shahameen Sheikh writes of making five trips to Kuwait in four months; Albright met with Kuwait's foreign minister about the issue on April 2, 2004; and the Albright Group's Carol Browner is reported to have "personally delivered a copy" of the proposal to his hotel when he was in Washington. Yet Kuwait appears reluctant: It took four months to reply to the proposal and then it would only say, in a letter dated August 10, that the proposal "will be taken into deep consideration and is currently being studied by the appropriate authorities." According to Ahamed al-Fahad, "The issue is now in the hands of the under secretary of foreign affairs," who was unavailable for comment. But Salem Abdullah al Jaber al-Sabah, Kuwait's ambassador to the United States, said, "As far as my information is concerned, my government is not considering such proposals."

Even if the deal falls through, the fact that the Carlyle Group and the Albright Group have been engaged in these negotiations may already have damaged debt relief efforts, hurting both Iraqi and US interests. Levinson points out that the Bush Administration has made commitments that Iraq's oil revenues will be spent on reconstruction. Yet the failure to deal with the reparations issue

means that "part of those resources instead are being diverted to Kuwait. Who pays for this? It's the people of Iraq who continue to make reparations payments, and it's US taxpayers, who are asked to foot the bill for reconstruction, because Iraq's money is going to debt payments."

Levinson says this is all the more remarkable because of who is involved. "Here you have two former Secretaries of State seemingly proposing to use their contacts and inside information to undercut the official US government policy." Washington University's Kathleen Clark says the proposal "lays bare how former high-level government employees use their access in order to reap financial benefits that appear to be enormous."

A case can certainly be made that James Baker and Madeleine Albright have had more direct influence over Iraq's debts and reparations payments than any politicians outside Iraq, with the possible

exception of the forty-first and forty-third Presidents of the United States.

As Secretary of State, Baker played a role in running up Iraq's foreign debts in the

first place, personally intervening in 1989 to secure a \$1 billion US loan to Saddam Hussein in export credits. He was also a key architect of the first Gulf War, as well as of the cease-fire that required Saddam to pay such sweeping reparations. In his 1995 memoirs, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, Baker wrote that after seeing the oil-well fires in Kuwait he cabled President George H.W. Bush and said, "Iraq should pay for it." Now, through the consortium, Carlyle could end up controlling \$1 billion of those payments.

The role of the Albright Group raises similar questions. As Secretary of State and Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright participated personally in drafting UN Resolution 986, which created the oil-for-food program, diverting 30 percent of Iraq's revenue from oil sales to war reparations. "It's a great day for the United States because we were the authors of Resolution 986," she said on *The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer* on May 20, 1996. Now, as a private citizen, Albright is a leading member of a consortium that is exploiting her connections to try to profit from the very reparations she helped secure. Albright also enforced the brutal sanctions campaign against Iraq, one of the effects of which was the hobbling of Iraq's state companies. Now, she is part of a plan to use Iraq's reparations payments to buy the very firms that her sanctions program helped to debilitate.

But it is Baker's envoy post that raises the most serious questions for the White House, especially because a Special Presidential Envoy is the President's personal representative, meeting with heads of state in the President's stead and reporting back directly to the President. If a President's envoy has a conflict of interest, it reflects directly on the highest office. Clark says, "There is absolutely a conflict of interest. Baker is aligned with two parties—the US government and Carlyle—that are not aligned with each other."

As envoy, Baker's job is to do his best to clear away Iraq's debts, lessening the burden on Iraqis and on US taxpayers. Yet as a businessman, he is an equity partner in a company that is part of a deal that would achieve the opposite result. If Baker the envoy succeeds, Baker's business partners stand to fail—and vice versa.

Have these conflicts influenced Baker's performance as envoy?

'There is absolutely a conflict of interest. Baker is aligned with two parties—Carlyle and the US—not aligned with each other.'

Has he pushed as hard as he could have for debt forgiveness? We know that Iraq's steep war reparations to Kuwait have largely escaped public scrutiny—if Baker has steered the Bush Administration away from the reparations issue, who was he working for at the time? The White House? Or Carlyle? Clark says questions like these are precisely why conflict-of-interest regulations exist. "We have reason to doubt that Baker is doing everything he could be doing on behalf of the United States because he has an interest in another side of the transaction."

This issue is all the more pressing because the file that President Bush handed to Baker is in disarray—ten months on, there is significantly less goodwill toward forgiving Iraq's debt than when Baker arrived. When President Bush appointed him, he praised Baker's "vast economic, political and diplomatic experience." And at first, Baker seemed to be making fast progress: After top-level meetings, France, Russia and Germany appeared open to canceling a large proportion of debt owed to them by Iraq, and Saudi Arabia and Kuwait seemed ready to follow.

But now, the negotiations are not only stalled, they seem to be going backward. Kuwait, for its part, has hardened its position. "Debts remain debts," Foreign Minister Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah said recently. And it has intensified its demands for Gulf War reparations, joining with Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan and Syria to claim an additional \$82 billion from Iraq in environmental damages.

And the Europeans? At a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on September 15, Senator Joseph Biden Jr. asked Ronald Schlicher, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State

for Iraq, about the status of the international negotiations.

"Has a single nation in the G8...formally said or requested of their parliaments to forgive Iraqi debt?" Biden asked.

"Not yet. No sir," Schlicher replied.

Not only has Baker failed to deliver any firm commitments for debt forgiveness; at the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund on October 2, it emerged that France had done an end run around Washington and was pushing a debt-relief deal of its own. French Finance Minister Nicolas Sarkozy announced that he had lined up Russia, Germany and Italy behind a plan to cancel only 50 percent of Iraq's debts—a far cry from the 90–95 percent cancellation Washington had been demanding. Yet Baker was nowhere to be found.

Busy negotiating the rules of the presidential debates, Baker has been MIA on the debt issue. Since he returned from his trip to the Middle East in January, the President's envoy has issued only two public statements on Iraq's debt, and he has been completely silent on the topic for the past six months—despite having publicly committed to getting the debt issue sewn up by the end of the year.

While this is bad news for Iraqis and for US taxpayers, it could be good news for Carlyle. A swift resolution to Iraq's debt crisis works against its financial interest: The longer the negotiations drag on, the more time the consortium has to convince the reluctant Kuwaiti government to sign on the dotted line. But if Iraq's debt is successfully wiped out, any proposed deal is off the table.

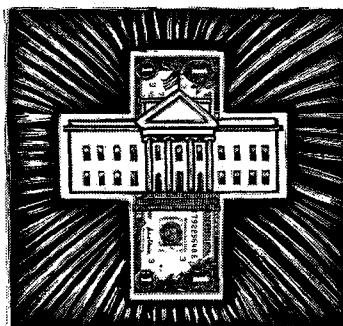
Baker's position as envoy has certainly been useful to his colleagues in the consortium. Whether Baker has helped solve Iraq's debt crisis is far less clear. ■

BUSH HAS REVIVED THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT THROUGH DIRECT FEDERAL LARGESSE.

Follow the Money

ESTHER KAPLAN

Five years ago the Christian right was in a tenuous position. Its standard-bearer, the Christian Coalition, was under investigation by the IRS and the Federal Election Commission, and many of its state chapters were nearing collapse. Its lead organizers were fleeing so fast that one former field director called the organization "defunct." Groups such as the Family Research Council and Concerned Women for America, undergoing their own leadership transitions, had not yet risen to take the coalition's place. The movement had staked nearly everything on the drive to impeach Bill Clinton, and after that effort collapsed, its leaders projected a palpable sense of gloom. Paul Weyrich, the master coalition builder who had inspired Jerry Falwell to build a "moral majority" in America, wrote a Dear Friend letter that resounded



with defeat. "I no longer believe that there is a moral majority," he wrote in February 1999. "I do not believe that a majority of Americans actually shares our values." He declared that the right had lost the culture war and that America was becoming "an ever-widening sewer." He encouraged activists to give up, to quarantine themselves from this infectious immorality, "to drop out of this culture, and find places...where we can live godly, righteous and sober lives." Weyrich's letter sparked enormous controversy

on the Christian right, but many saw it as the harbinger of a new evangelical separatism, marked by a retreat from political life.

Now, five years later, thanks to George W. Bush, the Christian right is on top of the world. Bush has not only bucked up the movement by ceding huge swaths of his domestic and international policy to this lobby, from his efforts to block abortions and gay marriage to his expenditure of significant political capital to support abstinence education, church-based social services and socially conservative judges. He has also revived the movement by

Esther Kaplan is the author of With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy, and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House (New Press), from which this article is adapted.

injecting tens of millions of federal dollars directly into the coffers of the Christian right's grassroots organizations, while at the same time starving their most vigorous political opponents of funds—singling out family planning and AIDS organizations for special punishment. While these groups receive a steady diet of financial audits, investigations and outright defunding, the President has turned his faith-based initiative into what the Rev. Eugene Rivers of Boston calls “a financial watering hole for the right-wing evangelicals.” As Weyrich told the conservative Christian magazine *World* shortly after Bush took office, “The Bush administration came along just in time to save many of these pro-family organizations. Four more years of a Gore administration—of being on the outside—and I think a lot of them wouldn't have made it.”

It was Weyrich's old running buddy, Richard Viguerie, the direct-mail guru who helped forge the religious right as a political force, and Howard Phillips, a former Nixon official who went on to head the Conservative Caucus, who first launched a campaign to “defund the left” in 1981. Viguerie and Phillips and their coalition of some eighty right-wing organizations went after groups concerned with core liberal issues—from women's rights to civil rights and the environment—that were also important elements of the Democratic base. Their targets included the Audubon Society, the Urban League, Planned Parenthood and other organizations suspected of using federal funds to “subsidize liberal antifamily values.” “Our opposition receives almost 70 percent of its funds from the government,” said Viguerie in 1982. “We want to stop that.” Viguerie and Phillips battled for a series of rule changes to accomplish their aims throughout the Reagan years, many of which were rebuffed, but some of which, such as the Mexico City Policy (now commonly called the global abortion “gag rule”), became government policy. This drive to defund liberal institutions was revived in the mid-1990s by the conservative true believers of the Gingrich revolution, in conjunction with think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation, though their flood of bills went nowhere.

The Bush White House has picked up where Viguerie and Gingrich left off—though with far greater success. When Bush political adviser Karl Rove was asked by *The New Yorker's* Nicholas Lemann how he defined the Democratic base, Rove responded, “someone with a doctorate.” And so, according to the ruthless logic of Rove's “strategy” shop, mainstream scientific, professional and policy organizations, whose constituencies tend to lean Democratic, have been removed from influential federal advisory positions and replaced by ideologues. The American Medical Association no longer advises US delegates to UN summits on children's issues; Concerned Women for America does instead. Experts from the Center for AIDS Prevention Studies at the University of California, San Francisco, no longer sit on the presidential AIDS advisory council; they have been replaced by a former beauty queen who lectures on abstinence and an antigay evangelical barnstormer from Turning Point ministries. Screening by the American Bar Association of judicial nominees has been replaced by advice from the far-right Federalist Society.

The Administration has used prosecutions, financial audits

and obscenity investigations against organizations bucking its policies or protesting them too publicly. Greenpeace, for example, a strong critic of Bush Administration environmental policy, became the target of federal prosecutors, who used an obscure nineteenth-century law to hold the entire organization criminally responsible for an act of civil disobedience by two of its members. Labor unions, which have lobbied hard against Bush's economic policies, were targeted with new financial reporting rules so byzantine—and so far beyond what is required of corporations or not-for-profits—that a federal judge stayed their implementation. This pattern is particularly evident when it comes to Bush policies that were designed to please the Christian right. After Planned Parenthood and two sex-education groups, SIECUS (the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States) and Advocates for Youth, launched a privately funded “No New Money” campaign to oppose federal spending on abstinence education, all

three groups received multiple federal audits.

Fifteen of the country's most prominent AIDS organizations, meanwhile, had their finances investigated by the federal government after they joined in a protest of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson at an international AIDS conference. And two HIV-prevention groups serving the gay community, San Francisco's Stop AIDS and Washington's Us Helping Us, were hit with audits and obscenity investigations that lasted for more than a year. Though Stop AIDS was exonerated by federal investigators, who found that even its most explicit HIV-prevention programs conformed with “currently acceptable behavioral theories,” the group learned in June that it would no longer receive federal funds. Nor would some two-thirds of the AIDS agencies the federal government had previously funded to do community prevention work—many of them outspoken critics of Bush.

Head Start program directors received a harsh warning letter—and a federal financial inquiry—after they raised their voices against Administration plans to restructure the preschool program, changes that would open the door for church groups to administer local Head Starts. “We agree that they have the right to audit us, since we receive government funds,” says James Wagoner, president of Advocates for Youth. “But what does it mean when the audit mechanism can be used selectively and politically?”

According to Kay Guinane, author of an OMB Watch report that documents several of these incidents, it's extremely unusual for federal audit powers to be used in such a targeted way, or to be triggered by policy disagreements. Guinane notes that organizations in sync with Administration policy have not faced financial audits, even when they appeared to be in open breach of the law. A board member of the Black Alliance for Educational Options (BAEO), which received \$600,000 to educate parents about school choices available to them, publicly announced that he'd use the funds to lobby the Pennsylvania legislature to subsidize homeschooling parents. While any nonprofit may use private funds to lobby, it's illegal to use public funds in this way, Guinane says, but, she notes, “that hasn't triggered an audit” of BAEO.

Mainstream scientific, professional and policy organizations have been removed from federal advisory positions and replaced by ideologues.

Family planning groups have borne the brunt of this defunding effort. International Planned Parenthood, long a target of the Christian right (the Family Research Council describes it as a "leftist organization" engaged in an "assault on religion" and the promotion of "rampant sexual promiscuity"), lost \$12 million a year when Bush reinstituted the Mexico City Policy, which denies funding to any organization that even takes a pro-choice position in public policy debates. Though Congress had approved the funding in a bipartisan vote, Bush withheld \$34 million in 2002 from the UN Population Fund after Christian right groups inaccurately claimed that it supported coerced abortions in China. The following year Bush defunded a consortium that provides HIV prevention and reproductive health to refugees in conflict-torn nations, justifying his decision with the same false claim.

When I asked Janice Crouse, a senior staffer at Concerned Women for America, what she saw as the biggest family-values victories under George W. Bush, she listed two items: his stepped-up activity against sex trafficking and his effort to "follow the money." "One of the things that have been a problem for us is that the radical nongovernmental organizations are so well funded," she said. "They know how to get grant money, they know the political structures and they are unified in their purpose to achieve reproductive services worldwide. We have been able to say, 'Where is this money going?' and we have been able to follow the trail. Tracing the money and insisting that money go to groups that support the Administration's values and policy positions is vitally important. And we've made a lot of progress."

Indeed, Bush's campaign has been bolstered by similar efforts on the part of conservative activists. The American Enterprise Institute recently teamed up with the Federalist Society to launch NGO Watch, an effort to discredit, and ultimately defund, enemy NGOs. On its list of targets? The ACLU, Human Rights Watch, the Audubon Society and, of course, Planned Parenthood.

As Janice Crouse indicated, defunding such organizations is only part of the Christian right's financial equation; the movement is also determined to funnel federal money to groups that support conservative family values. And its campaign has made advances on this front as well, especially through Bush's abstinence-only programs, international AIDS plan and faith-based initiative. Jim Towey, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, told me that he finds any allegations of political opportunism in federal grant-making decisions offensive. "That was a very sexy charge," he said, "but I don't see the proof."

The proof, in fact, is ready to hand. Pat Robertson's Operation Blessing—despite having recently been investigated by the State of Virginia for misusing relief funds to haul equipment for Robertson's for-profit diamond mining firm—was one of the first organizations to receive a faith-based grant. Robertson scored \$500,000, renewable for three years, for a total of \$1.5 million. The money pays for Operation Blessing to offer technical assistance to smaller faith-based outfits so they can compete for federal dollars of their own—and given that Robertson has disparaged several religious faiths as "aberrant" and insisted they not be considered

for federal support, he'll likely use the \$1.5 million to leverage grants for like-minded evangelicals. Chuck Colson—who had legal troubles of his own stemming from Watergate—was another significant beneficiary, through his evangelical organization Prison Fellowship Ministries, which was chosen by the faith-based office as one of only four national partners for a \$22.5 million workplace re-entry program for ex-offenders. No direct funding from the faith-based office has gone to a single non-Christian religious organization, whether Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist or Sikh.

The bulk of the first round of grants issued by the President's emergency AIDS plan has gone to Christian relief agencies such as Catholic Relief Services, World Vision, Habitat for Humanity, Opportunity International and the Salvation Army. And that list could tilt toward the Christian right in the next round, since Prison Fellowship Ministries, Campus Crusade for Christ, Samaritan's Purse and other conservative evangelical organizations have applied for future funds.

Another funding stream has already taken that path. Bush has more than doubled the federal abstinence budget during his tenure, and he's used the money to support the grassroots infrastructure of the religious right. The Tri-County Right-to-Life Education Foundation in Ohio received \$611,000 in 2001 and 2002, for example, and Metro Atlanta Youth for Christ, whose goal is "reaching the young people of metro Atlanta with the Gospel

of Jesus Christ," has received federal grants during the Bush years totaling \$455,000. By my count, Bush has sent more than \$7 million in abstinence dollars to such overtly

The Bush Administration has used prosecutions, audits and obscenity investigations against organizations bucking its policies.

Christian organizations, and he's sent another \$6.1 million in grants—some as large as \$800,000—to "crisis pregnancy centers," which counsel young women not to abort. These abstinence grants have taken small, volunteer-run organizations and turned them into substantial institutions; one crisis pregnancy center in Boston, A Woman's Concern, received a \$488,000 grant that allowed the group to bump its staff up from two to twelve. (By contrast, one lone federal abstinence grant has gone to a Planned Parenthood clinic during Bush's reign, for \$127,000.) "Basically, they have created an industry," says SIECUS spokesperson Adrienne Verrilli.

These patterns appear even more intentional when you look at who hands out the money. The Department of Health and Human Services responded to a Freedom of Information Act request by providing a list of independent experts the agency tapped to review grant applications from 2001 to 2003 for one of the most significant federal abstinence funding streams, known as SPRANS. The list is revealing. While it does include some state public health officials, it lacks any nationally respected experts on sexuality education and pregnancy prevention, whether from the Kaiser Foundation, the Alan Guttmacher Institute, Planned Parenthood or prestigious universities. Instead it includes nine representatives of Christian evangelizing outfits such as Summit Ministries and the Turning Point. The list also includes multiple representatives from some of the most politically influential Christian-right lobby groups in the nation: the Family Research Council, Concerned Women for America, the Christian Coalition, the Traditional

Values Coalition, the Heritage Foundation, even Weyrich's Free Congress Foundation. It likewise features Congressional family-values operatives such as House Republican aide Roland Foster, who has used his perch as a Governmental Reform subcommittee staffer to instigate audits of AIDS organizations and AIDS researchers. The Bush Administration has effectively turned over tens of millions of public dollars to the Christian right to distribute as it sees fit.

OMB Watch has called the Administration's assault on liberal

nonprofits a "death by a thousand cuts." The accompanying federal windfall for the Christian right could mark the rebirth of a movement by a thousand grants. In late 2001, after Pat Robertson stepped down as head of the Christian Coalition, Christian-right leader (and former presidential candidate) Gary Bauer told the *Washington Post*, "I think Robertson stepped down because the position has already been filled. [Bush] is that leader right now." Like so many effective movement leaders, he's proved to be an excellent fundraiser as well. ■

HOW AN ANTI-BUSH BACKLASH IS CREATING DIVISIONS IN ONCE-MONOLITHIC MIAMI.

Rocking the Cuban Vote

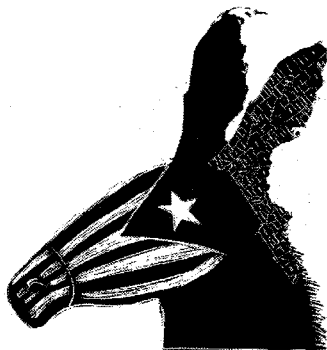
ROBERTO LOVATO

This article is part of a series that looks at swing states, and swing constituencies, in the 2004 presidential election. —The Editors

George W. Bush's brand of compassion doesn't please all of Florida's conservatives these days. The limited-Spanish-proficient President's message isn't translating very well among Cubanoamericanos—even though Bush came to Miami bearing federal gifts of billions of dollars for storm-ravaged residents of the hurricane state, has continued to trumpet his support for the embargo against Castro's Cuba and has been salsaing up his broken English speeches with broken Spanish (on August 27 in Miami, he said, "Last weekend, we're continuing to implement our strategy of *la verdad*, the truth").

Thanks to Bush's May announcement of new regulations limiting travel between the United States and Cuba, significant political divisions have taken root among heretofore reliably Republicano Cuban-Americans. As a consequence of the policy changes, introduced by Bush's Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, Cubans who had grown used to visiting family on *la isla* at least once a year can now see their relatives only once every three years. The commission also placed new restrictions on remittances (money families send from the United States to other countries) and changed the definition of which family members are eligible for both visits and remittances—dismissing the Latin American sense of family, which includes distant relatives, in favor of a more WASPish, North American one, which emphasizes spouses, sons and daughters, parents and siblings.

These policies have divided the Cuban political family (writ large) by dividing the Cuban genealogical family (writ small). When the President arrived recently at Miami Arena to deliver



a speech aimed at shoring up support among older, more conservative Cuban-Americans, greeting him outside were a group of younger, highly educated twenty-, thirty- and forty-something Cuban-American protesters. Waving American—and Cuban—flags and placards saying BUSH: DON'T DIVIDE THE CUBAN FAMILY were members of groups such as Cuban Americans for Change, which opposes the travel and remittance restrictions with the same single-mindedness that has long defined the political

culture centered in the faux Spanish Colonial streets of Little Havana. For them, the family crisis has supplanted the embargo. And as a result, the forty-plus-year embargo-based unity fostered by aging exile patriarchs and ex-CIA operatives is coming unglued; the once monolithic wall of Cuban-American politics is cracking.

The election-year volatility of Calle Ocho politics was previewed during the Elián González affair, which galvanized Bush- and Gore-leaning Cubans around the old-guard Republican embargo-politicos to help Bush to victory in 2000. But the Elián saga was only the most public scene in a political drama that will reach its climax when US-born Cubans and those who migrated after 1980 come to full political maturity as they register and vote in the next decade.

It is already clear that the division between those who want to define the Cuban family by continuing (and tightening) the embargo and those Cuban-Americans wanting to unite the family by removing the embargo is permanent—unlike the once immovable institutions that built Cuban-American power.

The Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) was once the star chamber of Miami politics, back when it housed the desk of the late Jorge Mas Canosa, who used to stroll into the White House and help shape US policy around Cuba and the rest of Latin America. Mas Canosa also had a hand in selecting people for crucial positions, from local and state officials to the head of the powerful Latin America desk in the State Department. Today, Castro-foe ("Fidel attacks me regularly") Joe Garcia, former

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head and current board member of CANF, outlines the new contours of Calle Ocho realpolitik: "We're not single-issue anymore, and we care about much more than just the embargo."

Garcia has been outspoken about what he feels is the short-sightedness of the Bush Administration's Cuba policies. "I think that what Bush has done best is to refine how he says 'Viva Cuba Libre' in order to produce a short-term psychological effect that inspires people like my grandmother, who was displaced from her home, displaced from her family, displaced from her culture, displaced from her country," he says. And in a refrain heard with greater frequency along Calle Ocho, Garcia adds, "Unfortunately for the Republicans, many of us heard this four years ago and know that it means nothing beyond November."

Since Garcia wrote letters critical of Bush policies toward Cuba, CANF has fallen from grace in Washington. Several members of the CANF board of directors left in protest to form the Cuban Liberty Council, now considered by many the new (but weaker) right-wing center of Little Havana.

Sounding like many in California during the Proposition 187 immigration wars, which ultimately wrought severe damage in Republican California, Garcia, who left CANF to become senior adviser in Florida to the New Democrat Network, foresees a similar fate for the GOP in the browning Sunshine State. "Bush may become the Pete Wilson of Florida politics. In their lust for a short-term electoral win, Bush and the Republicans have damaged things so badly that you will again see the development of the serious Cuban-American Democratic electorate in the near future."

How soon this emerges depends on how quickly and effectively the Democrats can capitalize on their opportunity to influence the mighty Cuban-American bloc—and Florida politics. Democrats have opened an office in Little Havana, deployed John Kerry, John Edwards and Spanish-speaking Teresa Heinz Kerry with increasing frequency, and launched three new Spanish-language ads critical of Bush's travel restrictions on Cuban families. Some, however, believe that the Kerry campaign may suffer in Florida as a result of its late and insufficient attention to the Latino vote. According to several Democratic strategists I interviewed in Florida, what National Council of La Raza's Raul Yzaguirre called in an April letter a "remarkable and unacceptable absence of Latinos" in the Kerry campaign could weaken the Democrat in Miami-Dade, Broward and other heavily Latino counties.

Regardless, the split in the Cuban family has a life that will extend beyond November. "I have not the slightest doubt that the issue of the family will supersede the issue of the embargo," says Silvia Wilhelm of the Cuban American Commission for Family Rights, a coalition of Cuban-Americans whose stated mission is "to preserve the integrity of the Cuban family and work to defeat those who want to divide it." Wilhelm and her organization have even launched frontal attacks against the once-invincible crown prince of the Cuban-American dynasty, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, who aspires to fill the giant shoes of his father, Don Rafael, the revered founder of the South Florida dynasty that thrived on anti-Castro and pro-embargo passions.

It was an act of defiance without precedent in the hallowed political history of Little Havana: Bearing the flags of Cuba and the United States and chanting "Rep. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, tear down this wall that separates families," several hundred protesters, who, as if campaigning to reform a corrupt ancient church, also bore placards saying THE FAMILY IS SACRED, stormed Diaz-Balart's offices. Whether one calls it sinful or saintly, such political behavior marks a radical change in a land where only weeks ago, an ecstatic crowd of around fifty Cuban-American hardliners greeted three men convicted of terrorist activities, including a plot to assassinate Castro in Panama in 2000. The men had been pardoned, with no apparent justification, by the outgoing Panamanian president, a decision that the White House chose not to protest. Their well-wishers included politicians affiliated with Don Rafael's dynasty.

Holding court from the head of a table at the storied Versailles Restaurant on Calle Ocho, Don Rafael tells his small audience that nothing will come of nothing in the current crisis of the Cuban family, a crisis that many believe is, in fact, fast weakening the grip on power of the patriarch and his political progeny. "The idea that there are generational differences [among Cubans] is a lie. *Una mentira total*," he said, a



Portrait composed of Palm Beach County chads (tinted with barbecue sauce) from the 2000 election. By Sean Miller.

total lie. Questions about polls like those conducted by pre-eminent Latino pollster Sergio Bendixen, pointing to strong slippage among younger Cuban-American voters, drew similar Lear-like ire. As if denouncing insurgents on the verge of revolution, the aging patriarch stood up and said at the height of his cracking voice, "These people trying to criticize Bush over the family policy haven't been able to affect the essence of the family—and they won't."

Agree or disagree with Diaz-Balart, one cannot but sit in awe of the deep, intimate intermingling of the personal and the political within the Cuban family (writ small and large): Diaz-Balart is Fidel Castro's former brother-in-law and his Congressmen sons, Lincoln and Mario, are dedicated to fighting the policies of their first uncle, the Comunista. Don Rafael's sister, Mirta, married Castro and bore his first son, Fidelito, after the young Rafael introduced her to Fidel when the two elite Cuban men attended law school in Havana.

Recently at Versailles, a Diaz-Balart-sponsored reception honored Republican senatorial candidate Bill McCollum, in yet another indication that the Cubanoamericano body politic is splintering. The Diaz-Balarts backed McCollum, who speaks even less *español* than Bush or Kerry, over Mel Martinez, a former Cuban refugee. George and Jeb and Lincoln and Mario and their longtime ally Ileana Ros-Lehtinen all support the controversial family travel policy, but were on different sides of the nasty fight between Martinez (who had the Bushes' backing) and McCollum. McCollum, the eventual loser of the race, told me at Versailles, between handshakes and "*Yo quiero su voto(s)*," that Martinez was "out of touch" on family issues affecting Cuban-Americans. But McCollum and the Diaz-Balarts appear to be even more out of touch, as McCollum won less than 2 percent of the Cuban-American vote in his losing bid.

Many I interviewed, like longtime analyst and writer Max Castro, told me that nothing, not ideology, not Cuba policy, nothing but the threat of an alternative Cuban power base being established on orders of Karl Rove and Jeb Bush is driving the internal Republican family feud in Florida. The Bushes, it appears, were hedging their bets against a Diaz-Balart backlash by backing the supposedly "more moderate" Martinez, who has amped up his pro-embargo rhetoric since running for the Senate seat.

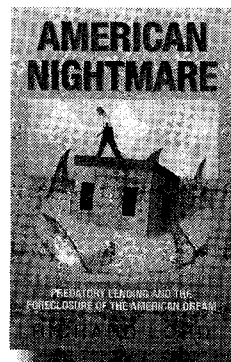
The Diaz-Balart dynasty will be the biggest loser in these feuds if Martinez wins the Senate race against Democratic candidate Betty Castor. Castor and Martinez are in a dead heat in their race, in which the Cuban-American vote will be definitive. If he wins, Martinez will become the highest-ranking Cuban-American politico in the land overnight. It's not insignificant that his base is in hurricane-racked Orlando and central Florida, several hours north of the historic South Florida citadel where the Diaz-Balarts are also under siege from the relentless tide of post-1980s Cuban migration.

Mapping out the contested new political geography of Cuban Florida are several surveys and polls, including polls by Bendixen and a July survey of Miami-Dade Cubans by the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project (SVREP). According to the SVREP survey, 76 percent of those Cubans arriving in Miami before 1980 support Bush. Bush support is strongest among older, less-educated voters, who make up the base of the Diaz-Balart embargo-backers; but as we move down the age and departure-from-Cuba ladder, the SVREP survey corroborates one of Karl Rove's worst nightmares: Cubans today are less inclined to support Bush, and they care about issues beyond the embargo. "Cubans are rapidly moving away from the slavish desire to subordinate their entire agenda to Cuba politics," says SVREP head Antonio Gonzalez, a longtime student of Latino politics in Florida. "If you take out the embargo, Cubans look more like liberal Democrats, like Kerry voters," he says.

Some among the old guard, like radical right Radio Mambi talk-show host Antonio Llano Montes (who told me, "If I had the button to the nuclear bomb to drop on Cuba, I would push it"), explain the polls by making a distinction between "economic migrants" and "political refugees," a distinction Silvia Wilhelm finds dehumanizing at best. "A small minority of very powerful, very rich and mostly old Cubanos has kept us divided for their own benefit based on outdated notions of good and bad Cubans," says Wilhelm, adding, "That's easy for them to do because the generation that left in the 1960s and '70s didn't leave family behind [in Cuba]. You see a change of perspective among those arriving from the late '70s to the present. We will see more funerals [of elderly Cubans] soon, and then you'll see the changes."

Whether or not Florida stays Republican red, Cubans like Tessie Aral are committed to helping others see the kind of red that Joe Garcia and many others predict. Aral, a 47-year-old single mom and partner in a travel agency, is willing to both brave the wrath of the Diaz-Balarts and break with family and political tradition. She and other very hot and very bothered GOPers formed Cuban-American Republicans for Kerry, a group that came together shortly after the May announcement of travel restrictions. Prior to 2004, Aral voted for Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush and backed

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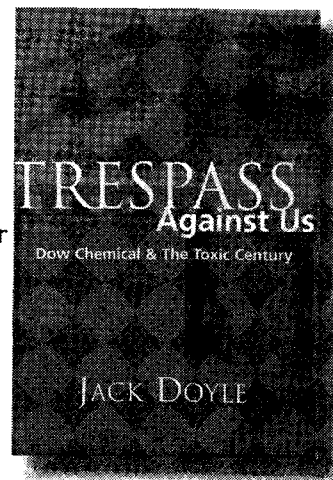
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embargista politics until George W. “woke” her up about the futility of the old ways. “I’ve been watching the Rafael Diaz-Balarts, the Lincoln Diaz-Balarts make policy toward Cuba for decades, and they have brought about no change on the island whatsoever,” says Aral, adding, “Bush doesn’t know what he’s doing either.”

At a meeting of several groups opposed to the Bush restrictions, Aral’s 14-year-old, Erika, watches her mom rail against the dynasty, the patriarchs and the politics of the Cuban-American past and reflects on the meaning of her own battles with Bush supporters on the once uncontested playground of her Christian school. “There are more pro-Bush students at my school, but there are lots of us who don’t agree, and we’re speaking out more,” she says.

Though the Martinez victory, the Bush brothers’ high-visibility hurricane-response photo-ops and some polls appear to give Bush a slight advantage over Kerry in Florida, the future of Republicans here will remain in the eye of another fast-growing storm. With the intensity of future political hurricanes hitting the crumbling Republican ramparts along the faux Spanish-style walls and streets of Colonial Calle Ocho, the confident, passionate stare of Erika Aral bodes ill for right-wing Miami. “I don’t like Castro, but I don’t like Bush either, because he’s telling us we can’t go see our cousins at least once a year like we used to—and that’s not right,” says Erika, who adds, “Bush stinks. That’s why I’m going to sign up as a Democrat when I turn 18.” ■

THE NEOCONS HAVE ISOLATED STATE DEPARTMENT EXPERTS—WITH DISASTROUS RESULTS.

Freeze-Out of the Arabists

STEPHEN GLAIN

Ronald Schlicher is a senior official in the State Department’s Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, an enclave for America’s Arab specialists. He is the kind of Middle East expert who would presumably be in the vanguard of officials bound for Baghdad to run the US Embassy there. A twenty-two-year veteran with experience in places like Cairo and Jerusalem, including a six-month assignment in postwar Iraq, Schlicher was this year presented one of the most distinguished honors among foreign-service officers.

Schlicher was awarded the American Foreign Service Association’s annual prize for producing the year’s best “dissent channel” cables—tightly written and cogently argued memos to Washington taking issue with particular aspects of US foreign policy. In effect, Schlicher was recognized for his constructive criticism of President Bush’s policies in the Middle East, a region Schlicher, a fluent Arabic speaker, knows as well as anyone in government.

But Schlicher, now Iraq desk officer in Washington, is not boasting about his prize. In fact, like the State Department’s other Arab hands, he’s not even giving interviews. American diplomats, both active and retired, say he is outraged at the way America’s most talented Arab experts were until recently blocked from playing any meaningful role in the administration of postwar Iraq.

“This administration doesn’t like naysayers,” says Edward Walker, a former US ambassador to Egypt and Israel and now the president of the Middle East Institute in Washington. “Ron challenged US policy and they shut him out.”

American Arabists are an embattled priesthood within the na-



tion’s foreign policy elite. Like the China hands of the 1950s, who were purged by McCarthyites, the State Department’s Middle East experts have been marginalized over the years for “going local”—associating themselves too closely with host governments and being critical of Washington’s wholesale support of Israel. It was Arabist denial of the true character and ambition of Saddam Hussein, their critics say, that caught Washington off guard when the dictator invaded Kuwait in 1990.

“Arabists,” said Francis Fukuyama while a Reagan Administration appointee on the State Department’s policy planning staff, “are more systemically wrong than other area specialists in the foreign service.” Such comments could easily be applied to the neoconservative cabal that continues to pilot Bush foreign policy despite the mess it has made of Iraq—after dismissing prescient State Department advice.

Although junior State Department officials have enrolled in Arab-language courses in record numbers over the past three years, it could take years to restore the Arabists’ ranks. The US Embassy in Baghdad will have fewer Arab specialists relative to its size and importance than any other American mission in the Arab world. John Negroponte, the current ambassador, had never served in the region before his recent appointment. The Bush Administration is so short on Middle East expertise that Christopher Ross, a veteran Arabist and former ambassador to Syria, was summoned to Baghdad out of retirement.

“Chris is a rare entity with his language skills,” says Robert Keeley, a former US ambassador to Greece and a member of Diplomats & Military Commanders for Change (DMCC), a group committed to Bush’s re-election defeat. “Yet the Pentagon took such charge of the occupation of Iraq that people like him are few and far between.”

Stephen Glain is a journalist and the author of Mullahs, Merchants, and Militants: The Economic Collapse of the Arab World, published in June by Thomas Dunne/St. Martin’s.

An Arabist exodus is part of the price Americans are paying for Bush's destructive hurtle into a needless war. Weeks before the invasion, John Brady Kiesling, who has been posted both to Israel and the Arab world, resigned in protest against US foreign policy along with two other State Department veterans. "Why does our President condone the swaggering and contemptuous approach to our friends and allies this Administration is fostering, including among its most senior officials?" Kiesling wrote to Secretary of State Colin Powell. "Our current course will bring instability and danger, not security." The subtext was clear: By listening to fabulists in the Pentagon and White House, instead of his eyes and ears in the nation's outposts abroad, the President was leading the country into disaster.

Kiesling left behind a foreign service that would reap the whirlwind he prophesied. "I spend all day writing memos, fighting dumb ideas," says a State Department official. "We fought the turfing-out of the [Iraqi] military tooth and nail, and [former US proconsul in Iraq Paul] Bremer wouldn't listen. We warned them again on the need for a more transparent rebuilding process, and they did nothing." Says a top Arabist who recently left the Near Eastern desk but requested anonymity because he remains in government: "I never felt like a pariah except in Washington."

In an Administration that penalizes those who see the world as it is versus what the President wishes it to be, it was inevitable that the Near Eastern Bureau would be attacked as an obstacle to the New Crusade. When, in the run-up to war, Powell tried to dispatch a team of Arab specialists to help rebuild Iraq's government ministries, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his aides vetoed the list of names. The State Department's Future of Iraq Project, which accurately predicted widespread looting and insurgency after Saddam's removal, was intercepted and buried by the Pentagon.

It is a peculiar feature of the Bush Administration and neocon ideology to treat foreign policy issues largely in military terms," says Charles Freeman, US ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War. "It is a diplomacy-free foreign policy, and this has cost us dearly in terms of our image and influence abroad." Freeman, who is also a member of DMCC, laments how "Powell's enormous talents have been squandered in favor of numerous military adventures." Even if a re-elected Bush were to clean house, he says, the damage done to the mechanics of American diplomacy has been all but irreversible. "So long as an important part of our body politic believes that security can only be established at gunpoint, an assumption that is belied by history, the United States will remain in international isolation," Freeman says.

The Arabists are used to watching from the sidelines as events unfold. Under Richard Nixon, the United States cemented its pro-Israel bias despite State Department warnings that it would fuel growing anti-Americanism in the region. Their frustration grew during the Middle East peace process of the 1990s, which became a policy colossus that smothered Washington's other interests in the region.

The Arabists' nemeses are familiar to anyone concerned about the integrity and direction of US foreign policy: Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Bill



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Luti, National Security Council senior director Elliott Abrams, former Defense Policy Board member Richard Perle—all of whom have since the Reagan years counseled a get-tough approach to the Arabs and unconditional support for Israel that explicitly excludes input from the State Department.

Officially, the State Department disputes that there is any tension between the Near East desk on one side and the White House and Pentagon on the other. Adam Ereli, the department's deputy spokesman, said it would be "splitting hairs" to suggest Iraq would be more stable today had the Future of Iraq Project's report been given a serious hearing.

Arabists acknowledge that the Pentagon and White House have been belatedly reaching out to the same diplomats they so recently undermined. With Washington isolated diplomatically, US troops mired in Iraq and the November presidential election around the corner, Bush aides have been frantically plundering the Near Eastern desk for advice, with some positive results. At the State Department's urging, Iraq's interim Prime Minister, Iyad Allawi, was given the authority to divert reconstruction funds away from large contracts tendered to big US firms and toward smaller projects to boost employment (that authority has been seriously impaired, however, by the US government's decision to allocate \$3.5 billion in reconstruction funds to training and equipping Iraqi police and other security forces, protecting oil supplies and preparing for the January elections). Iraq's minority Sunnis now have a larger voice in the interim government after months of ill-advised Pentagon backing of Ahmad Chalabi's Shiite-dominated factions. Yet Arabists harbor few illusions about the future. A second Bush Administration would mean another four-year quarantine for the Arabists, at least on the policy-making level.

True, the State Department is the primary US representative in newly "sovereign" Iraq. But just as Bush aides neglected post-war Afghanistan to focus on its real priority—Iraq—they now seem to be resetting their sights on the gold ring: Iran. Widely overlooked in the investigation of alleged Pentagon espionage involving Israel is that it reportedly revolved around a presidential directive that prescribes a tougher posture toward Iran. The Bush Administration's call for a Security Council resolution to short-circuit Tehran's nuclear ambitions looks ominously like the *force majeure* it triggered for regime change in Iraq.

Paul Hughes, a US Army colonel, remembers a remark made by senior Pentagon official Harold Rhode, prominent among the neocon faithful, as the two men were on a flight to Kuwait just before the US invasion of Iraq. The battle for Iraq, Rhode declared to Hughes and a detail of British officials, was the first step in the battle for Tehran. "We all exchanged glances and rolled our eyes," said Hughes. "The Brits couldn't believe it." Rhode denied through a spokesman he has ever made such a remark, though State Department and Pentagon officials say the neocons have made it clear they would target Iran in a second Bush term—particularly if Wolfowitz or Condoleezza Rice runs Foggy Bottom.

The Arabists' biggest fear is that a re-elected Bush would not call for the customary resignation of his senior-level policy-makers, which would allow them to remain in government without having to go through the Congressional confirmation process some of them would not survive. That, say officers on the Near Eastern desk, would all but extinguish the last line of official dissent against the Administration and its ruinous agenda for the Middle East. ■

LETTERS

C O N T I N U E D

(Continued From Page 2)

ALTERMAN REPLIES

Seattle

■ Theresa Amato's screed begins with personal invective and descends from there. I can't imagine that anything she has asserted will change the mind of a single sensible person. Her nasty innuendo to the contrary, all the following points remain unarguable.

§ In 2000, Ralph Nader raised money from progressive supporters with a promise not to campaign in battleground states, and yet he did.

§ In 2000 Ralph Nader campaigned on a platform of opening up American politics through progressive party building, though the combined support he received from African-American organizations, Hispanic organizations, gay and lesbian organizations, women's organizations, environmental organizations, arms-control organizations and progressive Jewish organizations added up to roughly zero. This time, he has lost the excuse of party-building—unless that means building up the nativist Reform Party, previously enamored of Ross Perot and Pat Buchanan—and earned the active enmity of those whose interests he

arrogantly professes to represent.

§ In 2000 Nader idiotically insisted that there was not "a dime's worth of difference" between Bush and Gore. I suppose it was possible to be that stupid four years ago, but would he really argue today that Gore would have invaded Iraq for no reason, appointed a radical Christian fundamentalist to oversee the nation's legal system, plundered the Treasury on behalf of the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans and opened up America's natural resources to ruinous exploitation by the oil and gas industries? If that's a "dime" then the multimillionaire Ralph Nader hasn't seen one for an awfully long time.

I can't say for certain—and neither can Amato—how many of Nader's significant funders are in his camp because they correctly view his nihilistic campaign as a second front for Republican Panzer divisions. Thenaderfactor.com has released a report that documents not only Nader's hiring of Bush supporters to argue its case in Florida and Arizona but also what it terms "a disturbing pattern of Bush supporters providing organized assistance to the struggling campaign of Ralph Nader, almost entirely in key 'battleground' states, including AZ, CO, FL, IA, NV, NH, NM, MI, OH, OR, VA, WV, and WI"

(for the full report: www.thenaderfactor.com/press/072304/). Many such Republicans have also been quoted about their intentions in both local and national media.

Common sense, moreover, dictates that Republicans would not pass up the opportunity Nader's campaign offers them. If it were not for his 2000 campaign, Al Gore would have trounced George Bush in Florida and elsewhere, preventing the Supreme Court intervention that threw the election to Bush. Nearly all Nader's high-profile supporters have come to see the error of their ways in helping to doom the nation and the world to suffering the effects of what is arguably the most malignant presidency in US history. And yet Nader not only refuses to recognize his role in this horror, he wants to star in the rerun. Such malevolent megalomania boggles the mind.

And as for Amato's anti-Manhattanite crack, though I do not endorse candidates, I've traveled nearly 20,000 miles in the past two months on a speaking tour to six swing states in the hopes of undoing some of the damage done to our election discourse by lies of Ralph Nader. And unlike Ralph, I haven't taken a dime from Republicans for my troubles.

ERIC ALTERMAN

COMMENT

(Continued From Page 8)

means dismal consequences for everyone younger who follows us." Adept at seeing through the race card, the gender card, the class card, we need anti-decline policies, not "anti-aging" products. "Full Employment-Plus" would mean millions of good jobs, a re-empowered labor movement and public policies routinely examined for their effects on the age-wage curve, security and seniority. Congress could penalize offshoring and downsizing and restore midlife antidiscrimination law. Progressives must recognize a new mission underlying their familiar work: rescuing the life course.

MARGARET MORGANROTH GULLETTE

Margaret Morganroth Gullette, a resident scholar in the Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis University, is the author of Aged by Culture, from which this essay is adapted, and of the prize-winning Declining to Decline.

Vaccine Poker

With the announcement that 50 million influenza vaccines from the British manufacturer Chiron won't be available in the United States this year because of possible contamination, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has been put in a quandary, its credibility once again damaged. From pushing the yearly flu vaccine accelerator pedal, urging everyone to get a shot, it suddenly has had to slam on the brakes. "Take a deep breath, this is not an emergency," Dr. Julie Gerberding, the agency's director, said, trying to ward off a stampede of shot-seekers. But such attempts are bound to fall flat, especially with the elderly, who need the vaccine to protect them from serious illness and death.

One of the main reasons a shortage like this can occur is because drug manufacturers are not eager to produce vaccines in the first place. This is why there are only two major flu vaccine makers—Chiron and Aventis—worldwide. Without a patent to insure high prices, the profit margins for "generic" vaccines is narrow. Plus, proper sterilization methods are quite expensive and cut further into the profit margin. Forget altruism, or concern for patients; drug companies are not eager to make a product they can't make a lot of money on. The only way to insure adequate supplies and reserves is for the government to step in and subsidize the manufacturing of vaccines. Yet last year Congress approved only half the \$100 million requested to develop better flu vaccines and improve the distribution system.

Instead of worrying about the flu, our government has been busy spending millions stockpiling over a million doses of anthrax vaccine (with no use for it in the foreseeable future), and more than 200,000 doses of smallpox vaccine (without a single case occurring here since 1949). These actions were taken so that the Department of Homeland Security can look like it takes the threat of biological agents seriously. A bioterror attack would likely affect only hundreds, or at the worst thousands, yet the expensive preparations are for millions of potential victims. BioPort makes the only anthrax vaccine, an unwieldy six-dose process that many military recruits have complained gives them a flu-like syndrome.

But fearing an anthrax attack since 2001, Congress has contracted with this company for millions of dollars in vaccine production. Since the vaccine is perishable, and there is no anthrax, most of what is produced is thrown away. Similarly, panicked over smallpox in 2002 and 2003, the government purchased 291,400 doses of the antiquated live virus vaccine, which was found to have significant side-effects, including heart problems. Ultimately, only 38,549 people were vaccinated and more than 250,000 doses were discarded. Meanwhile, influenza kills approximately 40,000 people in the United States every year and hospitalizes more than 200,000.

The CDC has asserted that at least 185 million Americans are at sufficiently high risk to warrant their getting the flu vaccine. This number includes those in contact with high-risk patients with chronic illnesses, pregnancy, asthma, advanced age. Flu is passed easily from person to person by airborne droplets. Hand washing and staying away from sick people offers some protection, but vaccine offers the most protection. As of this writing, the supply of vaccine available this year is only about 54 million doses. The CDC has been begging Aventis to produce more, but the company has agreed to produce only 1 million additional doses. Is this all they can make, or all they *will* make? No one I've spoken to at the manufacturer has been able to give me a straight answer to that question.

Instead of spending all its vaccine money on the production of all but useless bioterror vaccines, the government, through a more prudent flu subsidy, could increase the availability of a vaccine that might actually save lives.

MARC SIEGEL, MD

Marc Siegel, MD, is our "Ask Dr. Marc" online columnist. His book False Alarm: Profiting from the Fear Epidemic will be published this spring.

Dissent at 50

In the summer of 1953, the New School for Social Research hung a yellow curtain over a mural by the Mexican artist José Clemente Orozco. Orozco's transgression? He had included portraits of Lenin and Stalin in the work. In response to widespread criticism, the president of the institution, Hans Simons, insisted that the decision to hang the curtain was an internal matter—"a problem of the school," which did not concern "the outside." In the first essay of the first issue of *Dissent*, a new left-wing quarterly, Irving Howe, the driving force behind the journal, threw himself into the controversy.

"One is not shocked at this," wrote Howe, "the language is familiar enough, go a step further and you have the American Legion or the DAR telling one to *go back where you came from*. But wait: The philistine reference to 'the outside' comes not from the American Legion but from the New School, the New School which began as a refuge for liberalism and freedom. Well, Dr. Simons, one is sorry to say this, but the mural is not merely 'a problem of the school'; and one would be delighted to go back where one came from: New York."

Howe's salvo exemplified the spirit of the new journal, whose chief mission was to confront the poison of McCarthyism, to

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combat what the editors called “the bleak atmosphere of conformism that pervades the political and intellectual life of the United States,” and to forge a new kind of anti-Stalinist leftism. Still, Howe’s rhetorical bravado masked a certain malaise, for *Dissent* was a self-proclaimed socialist journal. “We shall try,” *Dissent*’s mission statement modestly noted, “to discuss freely and honestly what in the socialist tradition remains alive and what needs to be discarded or modified.” The editors—who included hardened veterans of the New York intellectual scuffles of the 1930s but also refugees from Hitler’s Germany—had no illusions about the task that faced them. “In America today,” they wrote, “there is no significant socialist movement and...in all likelihood, no such movement will appear in the immediate future.”

Despite that bleak forecast, *Dissent*, which turns fifty this year, shone brightly in its first decade with a steady stream of reportage, analysis and polemic: C. Wright Mills, Ignazio Silone, Meyer Schapiro, Czeslaw Milosz, Hannah Arendt, Dwight Macdonald, Gabriel Kolko and Dan Wakefield did superb work for *Dissent* in the 1950s. Richard Wright’s *White Man, Listen!* and Paul Goodman’s *Growing Up Absurd* were excerpted in *Dissent*, and Norman Mailer, who lent his name to the editorial board, gave Howe “The White Negro,” a berserk and brilliant essay that, in a sense, anticipated the 1960s counterculture and became one of the most celebrated and controversial pieces in the journal’s entire history.

If the analysis and polemic were frequently top-notch in the early years, so was the reporting: *Dissent* produced special issues on Africa, youth culture, New York City and the American workplace, and published fine dispatches about the burgeoning civil rights movement in the South. Another keen area of interest for the editors was the American labor movement: “In the 1950s,” Maurice Isserman wrote in his book *If I Had a Hammer*, “*Dissent* was the only intellectual quarterly to pay serious attention to the labor movement and to issues pertaining to the workplace.” (Some auto- and steelworker locals even ordered bulk subscriptions of *Dissent* for their members, a practice that continued until the early 1990s.)

The birth of the New Left in the early 1960s should have been a tonic for *Dissent*, but Howe and his comrades clashed with the new radicals. A 1962 meeting between *Dissent* editors and leaders of Students for a Democratic Society was a failure: In Tom Hayden’s “clenched style,” Howe later recalled, “one could already see the beginnings of a commissar.” There were brawls over Cuba, over “representative” versus “participatory” democracy, over the role of the working class. In 1965, Howe published “New Styles in ‘Leftism,’” a corrosive and sarcastic assault on the young radicals, who went on to shun the journal. Deprived of the finest young talent—who correctly felt that *Dissent* was less than honest about the Vietnam War—*Dissent* became a different magazine in the 1960s: The fire and freshness of the first decade hardened into something more academic, chilly and reactive. When co-editor Lewis Coser addressed the crack-up of the New Left in a 1970 essay headlined, “Indeed, They Did Grow Up Absurd,” there was no mistaking his sense of *Schadenfreude*.

The 1970s and early ’80s was not a stellar period for *Dissent*, but the journal endured and the founding editors gradually passed the reins to a younger generation, some of whom had New

Left connections. Writers like Robert Kuttner, Harold Meyerson, Deborah Meier, Jervis Anderson and Michael Harrington helped define *Dissent* in the years after Vietnam, as did international voices like George Konrád, Octavio Paz and Roy Medvedev, whose political and literary sensibilities dovetailed nicely with Howe & Co.

These days, *Dissent*, which is edited by Michael Walzer and Mitchell Cohen, and which has a circulation of 11,000, is not a galvanizing force in the world of writing and politics. The prose is often dry and professorial; the pages rarely catch fire in one’s hands. It remains a magazine, as Walzer once put it, “for people who know how to worry.” Still, in every issue one finds lively, jargon-free essays and reportage (not infrequently penned by up-and-coming writers) along with debates and exchanges on a wide range of topics: globalization, identity politics, Hillary Clinton and feminism, intervention in Kosovo, crime, bohemia, and the fate of social democracy. These debates and discussions, almost always vibrant, serve as a reminder that, in dim political times especially, *Dissent* assumes a function that goes beyond critical writing: At its best, the journal becomes something akin to a foghorn or a life raft—“an open political and cultural space,” Marshall Berman has written, “where democratic socialists who really meant it and survivors of the New Left could talk and listen and think and learn from each other, and have arguments without walking out, and imagine a golden age.”

At its worst *Dissent* becomes a finger-wagging grandfather. In spring 2002, Walzer, infuriated by demonstrations against the Afghan war, published “Can There Be a Decent Left?,” a stinging and much-discussed indictment of an American left that is full of “festering resentment, ingrown anger and self-hate,” a left that turns “world politics into a cheap melodrama.” In its tightly coiled fury, and its readiness to paint in very broad strokes, Walzer’s essay called to mind, uncomfortably, Howe’s polemics against the New Left. One of the more successful essays *Dissent* published in the 1990s was Michael Lind’s “Why Intellectual Conservatism Died.” Lind knew who his real foes were and lashed them accordingly. When, in the age of Bush, *Dissent*’s co-editor brings his full polemical energies to bear on the fragmented universe of American radicalism, one can’t escape the sense that *Dissent* is trapped in its own history, doomed to an interminable string of family feuds.

The people who founded *Dissent* set a herculean task for themselves: to revive the socialist project in America. Did they in any way succeed? On that question, Irving Howe, who died in 1993, was less than ebullient. “At times,” he wrote in his autobiography, *A Margin of Hope*, “we seemed to have almost nothing left but the animating ethic of socialism, and we knew that an ethic, no matter how admirable, could never replace a politics. But if you took that ethic seriously and persisted in struggling for modes of realization, you could have enough intellectual work for a lifetime.” It was *Dissent*’s fate, he confided in a different context, to “scratch away at what is.” Sustaining a socialist quarterly is no easy task in these United States, but fifty years later, *Dissent*, happily, is still with us—scratching, thinking, nail-biting, arguing. SCOTT SHERMAN

Scott Sherman is a Nation contributing writer.

BOOKS & THE ARTS

Learning to Love the Bomb

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

EDWARD TELLER: The Real Dr. Strangelove.

By Peter Goodchild.

Harvard. 469 pp. \$29.95.

While I saw Edward Teller at several scientific conferences and heard him lecture, I met him only once. It left an indelible memory. It was at the end of April 1954. By this time I was far enough along on my PhD thesis that it was clear I might actually get my degree. The weapons laboratories were hiring interns, and my name had been given to Teller as someone who might be recruited for Livermore, a laboratory created in 1952 at Teller's instigation as a competitor to Los Alamos in the design of hydrogen bombs. Livermore was located on an old Navy base not far from San Francisco. I'm not sure that its purpose was widely known. I doubt if I knew it, but I thought it might be interesting to meet Teller.

We agreed to meet in the lobby of a Washington hotel where the American Physical Society was having a conference. I had no trouble recognizing him, and he suggested we talk in his suite, where it would be quieter. He explained that he was giving a talk the following day, and to prepare it he would present it to me spontaneously; he asked me to interrupt if I had any questions. When we got to his suite he began pacing around the living room, lecturing. I think "lumbering" would be a better description. In 1928, when he had gone to Munich to study, he lost his right foot in an accident involving a streetcar. In later years Teller became an avid hiker but his prosthesis made his gait somewhat awkward. Suddenly in the middle of this lecture—during which I had remained mute, having no questions and not much understanding—he stopped and said, with no explanation,

*Jeremy Bernstein's most recent book is a biography, *Oppenheimer: Portrait of an Enigma* (Ivan R. Dee). He is currently preparing a monograph on the physics of Einstein's miracle year, 1905.*

that he'd much rather be discussing physics than politics.

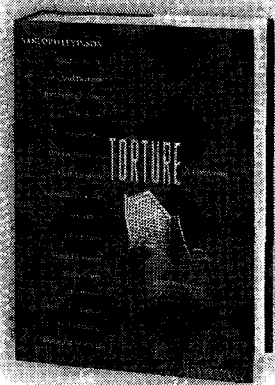
I had no idea what he was talking about until a couple of months later. On June 15 the Atomic Energy Commission released the full transcripts of a hearing before its Personnel Security Board, which had begun on April 12 and lasted until May 6, the result of which was that Teller's colleague J. Robert Oppenheimer lost his clearance and much of his reputation. Teller and Oppenheimer had had a difficult relationship, dating from the time that they were both at Los Alamos during the war. Even then Teller was fixated on building a hydrogen bomb and would not do the work of the laboratory that Oppenheimer was directing, which was trying to build a fission bomb. Teller was a witness—a hostile witness—and his testimony was devastating. At the end of it he

After Teller appeared as a hostile witness against J. Robert Oppenheimer, he became a pariah to much of the physics community.

was asked if he was having difficulty recruiting young people to come to Livermore. He replied, "I am going to spend the next three days in the Physical Society in trying to persuade additional young people to join in." I was one of the "additional young people," but I must not have made much of an impression, because I never heard from either Teller or Livermore, for which I am extremely grateful.

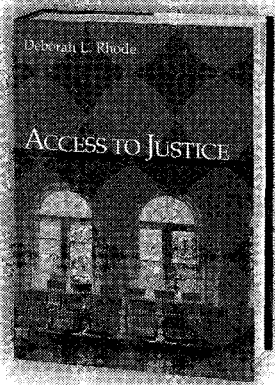
While the hearing ended Oppenheimer's work for the government, it also ended Teller's relationship with much of the physics community. To many he became a pariah, and people with whom he had worked at places like Los Alamos would no longer talk to him. It pushed Teller further and further into the right-wing community, which shared his paranoia about what they perceived to be the Soviet menace. It is impossible to be neutral about this. You may think Teller was the savior of Western civilization, or you may think he was an unprincipled fanatic, but you won't be indifferent. That

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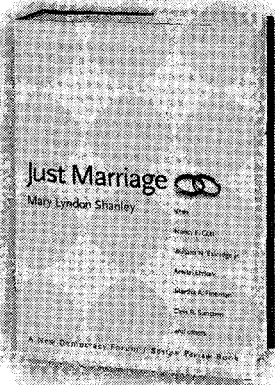
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is why it is so difficult to write an objective biography. I think the British television producer Peter Goodchild, also author of a biography of Oppenheimer, makes a decent attempt. But the facts speak for themselves. I was amused by his epilogue, where he tries to give a balanced summary. For example, after pointing out Teller's specious arguments about the "benign" nature of radioactive fallout from nuclear weapons testing, he says, "Teller fought what he saw as the hysterical, ill-educated and irrational fear of nuclear activities with great vigour. He battled against the fears of fallout in the 1950s and his argument—that there was an over-reaction to the dangers of fallout—still has support from researchers to-day." One wonders who these unnamed "researchers" are. It's as if he were summarizing another book. In the body of the book he makes it abundantly clear what he really thinks of Teller. Since I share the view that Teller was often an unprincipled and intellectually dishonest fanatic, I am generally admiring of Goodchild's book. The question is what made Teller this way. In this I think Goodchild misses an important point, because he does not understand the physics. If this were a biography of, say, Einstein, that would be fatal, but since so much of Teller's later life was political, the science is somewhat secondary.

Goodchild's scientific misunderstandings are too numerous to mention them all, but let me give one example. He gives an account of the discovery of fission that is rather muddled. Then he goes on to describe the first practical application of fission, which was the construction of a reactor—it went critical on December 2, 1942—at the University of Chicago by a group led by Enrico Fermi. His description is totally confused. Two crucial elements of a reactor are the fuel—in this case natural uranium—and the so-called "moderator." Of the latter, Goodchild writes, "Then, by withdrawing or immersing the uranium in the moderator [in this case purified graphite], the reaction could be accelerated, or dampened, or stopped altogether." He has confused the role of the moderator with that of the control rods that are made of a neutron-absorbing material and are moved in and out. The function of the moderator, which along with the uranium is never moved anywhere, is to slow the neutrons and thus enhance the fission reaction. Of course, these howlers could have been prevented if a competent physicist had vetted his manuscript. But there is a deeper point.

The question that any biographer of Teller has to try to answer is how good a physicist he was. What did he actually accomplish? To me this, along with his experiences under the brief Communist regime in Hungary when he was a young man, is a profound key to Teller's character and behavior. After the Communists were overthrown there was an outburst of anti-Semitism that affected the Tellers. On the physics, I have asked several physicists who knew Teller when he was actively doing physics how they would rank him. Among them there is agreement that few physicists of his generation had more natural ability. Some told me they thought he was more gifted than Oppenheimer. But given his gifts, what did he actually achieve in physics? This, incidentally, is often asked about Oppenheimer. I believe the answer is, relatively little. After the war Teller taught at the University of Chicago from 1946 to 1949. Goodchild, as a testimony to Teller's productivity at that time, notes that he co-wrote thirteen papers. He does not tell us what role Teller played in writing these papers or what their significance was. I certainly have not read them, and I am not aware of anything Teller did then that had much impact. Goodchild quotes some of Teller's contemporaries, all of whom note that Teller had what used to be called "grass-hopper mind." He was simply unable to concentrate on a single problem. This, incidentally, affected his teaching. Physicists who were in his classes inform me that they were awful. He never prepared his lectures. Goodchild notes that while at Chicago Teller had what Goodchild refers to as a "mid-life crisis." He was not getting along with his colleagues and was deeply depressed because work on the hydrogen bomb was not progressing. He was also not very satisfied with the physics he was doing. But I think this frustration goes back much further.

Teller came to this country in 1935 from England, where he had been granted haven after the Nazis removed anyone with a Jewish background from teaching in a university. (This was particularly ironic in Teller's case, since he had come to Germany in 1926 to escape anti-Semitism in Hungary, and had stayed on to finish his PhD.) Until then, he had not done physics. His thesis, which he finished under the guidance of Werner Heisenberg in 1930, was in physical chemistry. From Goodchild's description, it sounds like pretty mundane number-crunching. In fact, Heisenberg had to tell him that he had done enough and could stop. The problem was apparently so open-

ended that it was not clear to Teller if he had solved it. This is usually not a good sign.

For several years after his arrival in the States, Teller continued to work in physical chemistry and was considered a bit of an outsider by the physicists with whom he came into contact. One of them was the wonderful Russian eccentric George Gamow, one of the most creative physicists of the twentieth century. Gamow had escaped from the Soviet Union and had relocated to George Washington University, where he was the chairman of the department. Like almost everyone else, he had been impressed by Teller's brilliance and brought him into the department. Teller himself

has said that while he was there one of his main jobs was to sort out Gamow's ideas. Ironically, later in his career there were people who performed the same service for Teller. At least one paper that he wrote with Gamow, on radioactive decays of nuclei in which electrons are produced—so-called beta decay—is a kind of classic. Who contributed what to this paper I do not know.

There is another thing that people who knew Teller at this time agree on. He was a charming, collegial man. The Teller household was practically a hotel. Other physicists loved to talk to him about their problems. He would say, "I don't understand it, but I will explain it to you." Very few people after Los Alamos would have called him "charming and collegial." What changed? When I was writing a *New Yorker* profile of the physicist Hans Bethe, who knew Teller from his European days, I discussed this with him. To me the answer was clear. When Oppenheimer first thought of a nuclear weapons laboratory he had the naïve idea that if the explosive material was available it would take just a handful of his colleagues—students and the like—to make a bomb. He soon realized that he was going to need a full-scale laboratory and that this would have to be organized into divisions. Among them was the theoretical division—the T-division—and to run it Oppenheimer appointed Bethe. Teller never got over this. He was still angry about it in the memoirs he published in 2001, at age 93. He died two years later. All of his insecurities as a physicist were reinforced by what he perceived as a terrible slight. From that point on he refused to do the work of the laboratory. His hostility toward Oppenheimer can, I think, be traced to this decision. I also think the fact that he did not find real satisfaction in the physics he was able to do contributed to the lack of

balance he showed when it came to politics. Everything became personal. Bethe, for example, while certainly as concerned as Teller about the security of this country, was able to examine alternatives objectively. It was unthinkable that Bethe would falsify the scientific basis of a weapons program, something that Teller did routinely, simply to get his way. I have always thought the fact that Bethe had a deeply satisfying scientific career—he won the Nobel Prize in 1967—gave him the bal-

Teller supported nuclear testing in the atmosphere regardless of environmental dangers, but he argued his position like a charlatan.

anced outlook that Teller never achieved.

The part of Goodchild's book—most of it—that I found truly excellent had to do with Teller's activities after the war. Goodchild has put this together more fully than anyone else, and I learned many things that were new to me. There are three major themes, each one of which would take a long essay to adumbrate. They are the hydrogen bomb, the test ban treaty and Star Wars. I will give the elements briefly.

Teller's obsession with the hydrogen bomb preceded Los Alamos. Once there, it was all he really wanted to work on. At that time, and for many years thereafter, he devoted himself to what was known as the "classical Super." Put very crudely, this is a container into which you put the light elements that you hope to fuse together with the release of energy. Typically these are isotopes of hydrogen, such as deuterium and tritium. Into the container you put a fission bomb. When it explodes, you hope that it generates enough heat to cause the fusion. The advantage of the classical Super is that there is no limit to the amount of fusion fuel you can put into the container and so no limit to the strength of the bomb. The disadvantage is that it does not work. For almost a decade Teller tried different configurations, only to have them shot down. His response each time was to call into question the competence of the messenger. But the laws of nature are quite impersonal and do not yield to ad hominem arguments.

The situation with regard to the possibilities of making a hydrogen bomb changed radically in December 1950. The exact sequence of events has been disputed ever since. It will probably never be settled, because a number of the principals are now dead and because the material is still in considerable part classi-

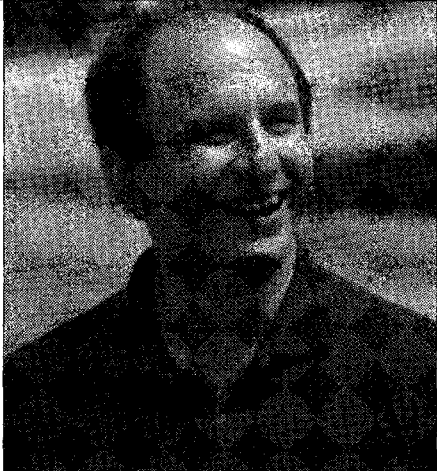
fied. Goodchild gives various versions, none of which can be verified for the reasons I cited. But it must be said that here again Goodchild clearly does not understand the physics. I believe that what happened was the Polish mathematician Stanislaw Ulam had the breakthrough idea. He was not working directly on the hydrogen bomb. Indeed, he was one of the people who showed that the classical Super would not work. He was trying to improve the efficiency of the fission bomb. His idea was to use the material flux from an exploding fission weapon to compress a container that held the light isotopes. This compression would dramatically increase the fission reaction rates.

Once Teller became persuaded that this notion might work, he modified the design so that it became the basis of a hydrogen bomb. Teller had the idea of using the X-rays that carry off most of the energy from the primary fission bomb to do the compression. Exactly how this works is still classified. When this modified design was presented to the people in the field, they agreed with Oppenheimer that it was "technically sweet," so we have hydrogen bombs.

There are two ironies to report. Once the design was accepted, Teller left Los Alamos because he could no longer control the project. In his mind it had become his, and he was to the end very ungracious about Ulam's role. The second irony was emphasized to me by Freeman Dyson: The hydrogen bomb was irrelevant. Ordinary fission bombs can be made powerful enough. Indeed, the current arsenals of the United States and Russia look the same as if they consisted of fission bombs alone.

Teller was adamantly opposed to any agreement to stop nuclear testing in the atmosphere. His concern was the continual development of nuclear weapons, but he argued for his position like a charlatan. He found some statistic that Denver had, for a period, a lower rate of leukemia than some cities at sea level. He argued that small amounts of radiation might therefore be good for you. His most cynical attempt to prolong testing above ground was something that was called Project Plowshare. This was presented as a program to accomplish useful tasks, like earth-moving, with atomic explosions. An example, noted by Goodchild, was to dig a harbor at Cape Thompson in Alaska. As was pointed out to Teller, this harbor would have had no economic value. Among other things, the water was frozen for most of the year. Teller told the local people that surely they could find some useful task for these ex-

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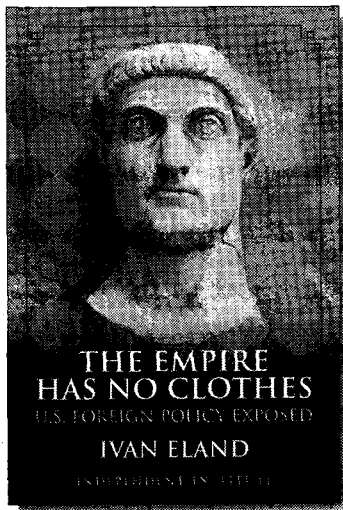
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plosions. Teller could not have cared less so long as the tests went on. Finally, we have Star Wars.

Alas, this chimera is still with us, two decades after Teller persuaded President Reagan that a defense against nuclear-armed missiles was not only possible but feasible in a reasonably near future. The elements of the system kept changing as the various brainstorms emanating from Livermore turned out not to work. With each of them Teller announced how wonderful they were, conveniently ignoring data that disagreed. The final one was something called "Brilliant Pebbles," involving

devices whose number and size kept changing and that were supposed to float around in outer space. Teller managed to persuade the first President Bush to invest heavily in this scheme. The problem with it, and with the schemes that so captivate Bush's son, is that it is easy and inexpensive to modify the offense to defeat them. Even worse, the effect of this development is, and was, to enhance the arms race. The current Administration has abandoned part of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and appears to be working on the development of new tactical nuclear weapons. Teller would have been pleased. ■

About Henry

BRENDA WINEAPPLE

AUTHOR, AUTHOR. By David Lodge. Viking. 389 pp. \$24.95.

THE MASTER. By Colm Tóibín. Scribner. 338 pp. \$25.

Henry James is not a name that springs to mind when we think of adventure stories, prose epics or historical fiction. His forte was sensibility, not spectacle, in both art and life, and he specialized in capturing the intricacies of consciousness in rich, unmistakable prose. And by all external measures,

he lived an uneventful life. Born in New York City in 1843, he moved to Britain as a young adult, and he wrote. He jotted ideas in his notebooks; he penned thousands of witty letters; he contributed essays and tales to magazines; he composed novels, biographies, criticism, plays and a memoir; and at the end of his life set himself the herculean task of revising an entire fictional oeuvre. He never married or entered into any romantic liaison, so far as we know, though he did accept dinner invitations (107 in one year), travel occasionally and entertain guests. In 1897 he purchased a Remington typewriter so he could dictate his novels to a typist instead of writing them longhand. This is not the stuff of high drama.

Still, James has been fortunate in biographers (besides Leon Edel, there's R.W.B. Lewis, Fred Kaplan and Lyndall Gordon, to name just a few), even though he deliberately intended to elude the "publishing scoundrels," as he called the scavenging narrator of "The Aspern Papers," by chucking much of his correspondence into a fire. Yet if "biography first convinces us of the fleeing of the Biographied," as

Emily Dickinson (no stranger to the elusive) once observed, it seems that James, oddly, has now landed in the province of novelists. This year alone, two very different writers, first Colm Tóibín and then David Lodge, have tackled the life—and, by extension, the art—of Henry James in two very different historical novels.

Both Tóibín's *The Master* and Lodge's *Author, Author* adduce the same anecdotal chestnuts and, taking James's genius for granted, pursue the sources of his art in his various failures either as literary entrepreneur or human being: When a young man, James failed to participate in the American Civil War, unlike two of his brothers, because of an "obscure hurt" received while helping extinguish a fire. In early 1895, as an established author of middle age, he was treated to an interminable fifteen minutes of hisses and boos when he took an ill-advised curtain call after the first performance of his play *Guy Domville* on the London stage. He enjoyed friendships with a number of men and women, in particular the novelist Constance Fenimore Woolson (grand-niece of James Fenimore Cooper), but she hurled herself from an upper-story balcony in Venice and died groaning on the ground below. After sorting through Woolson's correspondence (and torching some of it),

Brenda Wineapple is the author, most recently, of *Hawthorne: A Life* (Random House) and is writing a book about Emily Dickinson.

James "buried" her dresses in a Venetian lagoon by pitching them overboard, a weird decision by anyone's standards. The unweighted garments bubbled to the surface, yards of velvet and silk ballooning grotesquely on the water. Then there was the move from London to Lamb House, in Rye, and in 1909, seven years before his death, a nervous collapse.

Even more important to both novelists is James's ambition. Lodge's Henry James aspires "to be the Anglo-American Balzac," as he tells his good friend George Du Maurier, the half-blind *Punch* illustrator who eventually writes an enormously popular (and now forgotten) novel, *Trilby*. *Author, Author* subsequently presents Du Maurier's almost inadvertent success in poignant counterpoint to James's career at midlife. Having renounced the pleasures of a conventional domestic life—"literary greatness was incompatible with the obligations of marriage"—as well as sexual intimacy of any kind, Lodge's James is a bachelor novelist committed to an aesthetic of making "life as experienced on the pulses and in the consciousnesses of individual human beings." In other words, he wishes to be considered the successor of Dickens, George Eliot, Hawthorne—and rich besides. Why not? Rider Haggard's potboiler *She* sold 40,000 copies, and Mrs. Humphrey Ward, another lesser light, was raking in cash with her lumbering clichés. By contrast, sales of James's books were plummeting, especially after that long-winded *Princess Casamassima*, to say nothing of its successor, *The Tragic Muse*.

Lodge's James decides to try his luck in theater, crude as it was, with theatergoers applauding the likes of Oscar Wilde, whom the celibate James, squeamish about homosexuality and "bohemian sordidness," considers an exhibitionist dandy. ("Something fastidious in him [James] recoiled from any thought of intimate sexual contact involving nakedness," Lodge explains, "the groping and interlocking of private parts, and the spending of seed." If Lodge's repressed hero were to picture himself so compromised, he'd prefer it be with a beautiful young man; but this fantasy merely fuels his nascent and none-too-pleasant homophobia.)

Skilled in all forms of denial—for a connoisseur of the inner life, this James seems oddly impervious to his own—James rationalizes that a theatrical success will buy him time to write "real" literature. But after the humiliating premiere of *Guy Domville*, when his friends call "Author, author" (hence the title of the book) and James unwisely appears onstage, he reconsecrates

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himself to his art, adapting the conceptual lessons of the theater to narrative prose. To Lodge's James, then, writing is a conscious act of intellectual discernment, formal craft, deliberate decision-making. And so with *Guy Domville* inaugurating James's late phase, James will now write such nuanced masterpieces as *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove* and *The Golden Bowl*. Of course, James can't know his future and dies believing that an "unsympathetic literary world" had perversely neglected his work.

And so Lodge, himself a brilliant critic and author of such gems as *The Novelist at the Crossroads*, will step into the breach at his novel's end, addressing himself directly to The Master. "You only contributed one word to the English language," Lodge consoles his dying Henry, "but it's one to be proud of: 'Jamesian.'"

Having confined himself more or less to a limited point of view with James its center, Lodge nonetheless packs James's world with characters like Edmund Gosse, Morton Fullerton and a 5-year-old Agatha Christie, much as if Trollope were rewriting James, or, more precisely, as if Lodge were placing James in one of his hectic novels of academic foible—without, however, the foible. He does, however, grant himself omniscience to recount *Guy Domville's* opening night, when theatergoers like George Bernard Shaw discuss it with the neophyte drama critic H.G. Wells, who'd just sold a serial called *The Time Machine*.

Lodge's novel is spirited historical fiction—the kind that Colm Tóibín's Henry James dismisses. "I view the historical novel as tainted by a fatal cheapness," Tóibín's James roundly declares. Covering roughly the same period (January 1895 to May 1899), Tóibín's evocative novel *The Master*, published this past spring, represents James as a man of regret, reminiscence and not a little self-reflection. "Once I wrote about youth and America," he muses, "and now I am left with exile and middle age and stories of disappointment." This is a James of gesture, not bustle; of susceptibilities rather than speeches. And where Lodge's James briskly advances, stoutly dislodging the slings and arrows of midlife, Tóibín's James fends off his recurrent dreams of the dead with the urge—the compulsion—to write, "anything to numb himself, distract himself."

Yet with the exception of Du Maurier, who does not appear in Tóibín's book, Tóibín invokes most of the same characters and circumstances as Lodge, with

a difference: the relationship with Constance Woolson, with whom James shared a house in Bellosguardo, a suburb north of Florence, for a short and clandestine time; the premature death of his beloved cousin Minny Temple, who enters his fiction as Isabel Archer and Milly Theale; the truncated life of his gifted, if waspish, sister Alice; his relationship, never easy, with brother William—all this is rendered as rumination in translucent prose. Keeping vigil one rainy night in Paris, looking upward at the window of a male friend in one of the "truest" hours he ever lived, he ponders over and over "the mystery of having a single consciousness," the knowing that everyone stores away "an entirely private world to which they could return at the sound of a name, or for no reason at all." Such, as Tóibín tenderly traces them, are the deep springs of James's art.

Tóibín's book is organized around images of watching and waiting, of orphans and exiles and crucial moments, largely unspoken: the glance exchanged between James and an Irish manservant, each of them discreetly aware of what passes between them, or so we think, or so James does; his awareness of the bland rapaciousness of the beautiful young sculptor Hendrik Andersen, to whom he is nevertheless attracted. (Tóibín's James is a celibate homosexual but not a squeamish one, and one of his best scenes takes place during an idyllic summer when Minny Temple was vibrantly alive and Oliver Wendell Holmes, ex-soldier, brushed against James as the two young men shared a bed in a New England farmhouse.) His sighting of a young girl on a lawn, unlatching memories of his sister Alice, and the story of his father's nervous breakdown, elegantly recalled, slowly expand into *What Maisie Knew* and *The Turn of the Screw*. Or James remembers with poignant clarity his brother Wilky's bloody homecoming from the war James himself did not experience firsthand. Such luminous incidents, "flashes and moments," bloom into the lustrous tales and novels we recognize, indeed, as Jamesian.

Unlike Lodge's proud and conscience-ridden Anglophile who in 1915 takes up British citizenship as an act of solidarity with his adopted country (and a protest against his native one), Tóibín's James is a perpetual expatriate haunted by the past, unfulfilled desire and even the guilt that seems to presage art (themes in Tóibín's previous fiction); he's the beast in the jungle, ready to spring into action—that is to say, to lose himself in his work. It's this work, fed by solitude, that James pro-

tests, not just his fastidious self. What's more, it's worth protecting. "Art makes life, makes interest, makes importance," James famously tells H.G. Wells.

Setting the tone for Lodge's categorical James and Tóibín's more shaded one is James's story "The Beast in the Jungle," in which John Marcher realizes too late he has neither fully loved nor lived. Is this the lot, then, that these novelists assign James, depicted either as Lodge's prig (who rejects Woolson) or Tóibín's depressive loner committed to his vigils? Are these the only choices available to a post-Freudian world? Isn't it possible that something like friendship—an underrated phenomenon—might have offered James pleasures unavailable to the egotistical Marcher? Still, both Lodge and Tóibín staunchly suggest that art is a pursuit worthy of the energy—the very life—that James lavished on it. *Author, Author* comes out and says so, and *The Master* makes us feel that, despite the cost, this must be true.

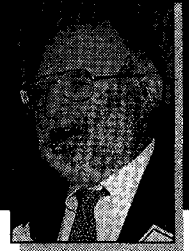
In the acknowledgments at the end of *Author, Author*, David Lodge claims he didn't learn of Tóibín's novel until after he delivered his book to his publisher. "I leave it to students of the Zeitgeist," he concludes, "to ponder the significance." So we might. Both Colm Tóibín, the gifted Irish novelist, and Lodge, the British one, take the position that there's something noble about the calling of art (especially if you're Henry James), and that art involves sacrifice and passion as well as subtlety and diplomacy, qualities not readily associated with America today. Their James is a thoroughgoing American of the best international sort, and one of America's finest exports, for he represents the very subject that James himself eloquently molded, the American innocent whose purity of intent does not protect him from the cruelties, and responsibilities, of experience. Nor does it exonerate him. Lodge's book begins and ends with James's last days and a brutal evocation of war; Tóibín's ends more discreetly, with James tossing aside his brother William's suggestion that he give up a subject matter that dramatizes the insipid and write about something rock-hard, like the Puritans.

But William is now ill, and Henry will prevail to sound, once again, the intricate depths of the human heart. "The moral?" concludes Tóibín's James, half amused. "The moral is the most pragmatic we can imagine, that life is a mystery and that only sentences are beautiful, and that we must be ready for change." ■

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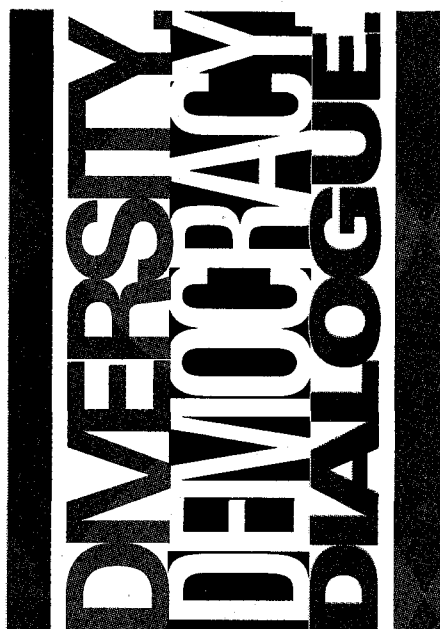
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THEATER

Presumed Innocent

ALISA SOLOMON

GUANTÁNAMO: HONOR BOUND TO DEFEND FREEDOM

Unlike news reports, theater isn't expected to stick to the facts. By nature, the form is duplicitous, built on a sandy foundation of make-believe and pretense.

Good documentary drama exploits its inherent paradox: Creating artifice from verbatim texts, it uncovers truths by playing on the tension between what's real and what's invented. Typically, it reveals not only the unfolding of a troubling event but also—by exposing a gap between history and its representation—gives us the critical distance to assess the contradictions, hows and whys of that unfolding.

Perhaps it's too early to achieve such critical distance on the US interrogation camp at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where some 500 men deemed "enemy combatants" in the "war on terror" are being held without charges in 8-by-10-foot metal cages, often shackled, isolated, subjected to abuse and, until the Supreme Court ruling on June 28, lacking recourse to challenge their detention. At least that's what the makers of *Guantánamo: Honor Bound to Defend Freedom* seem to have decided. Created in London at the Tricycle Theatre, and currently running at the Culture Project in downtown Manhattan, this moving chronicle, focusing on four men from England snatched from their lives and thrown into detention, concerns itself primarily with telling the appalling tale.

The first of three acts offers the Kafkaesque accounts of how the men came to be arrested: With wit and simmering rage, Wahab al-Rawi (Ramsey Faragallah) describes how he and his brother Bisher (Waleed Zuaiter) are arrested in Gambia, where they'd gone to establish a peanut oil business. After twenty-seven days, Wahab is released; Bisher is shipped to Gitmo, where he languishes still. So, too, does Moazzem Begg (Aasif Mandvi), whose story is told by his bereft and bewildered father (Harsh Nayyar). A British citizen who had moved to Afghanistan to set up a school and then to lay water pipes, Moazzem crosses the border to Pakistan when the American invasion begins. One night he is dragged from his home, stuffed into the trunk of a car and thrown down what England's Lord

Justice Johan Steyn calls the "legal black hole" that is Guantánamo. (Steyn's blistering words—taken from a November 2003 lecture—open and close the play.) Manchester-born Jamal al-Harith (Andrew Stewart-Jones) relates his own story, explaining how a sort of vagabonding spiritual pilgrimage to Pakistan lands him first in a Taliban jail as a suspected British spy, and then in Cuba as a suspected Islamist terrorist. Al-Harith was one of five British nationals released in March 2004 after two harrowing years. To this day, he says, "they didn't give me a reason for being in there."

These intercut narratives—drawn from interviews conducted by the playwrights, journalist Victoria Brittain and novelist Gillian Slovo—powerfully suggest that the United States has rounded up suspects by going on a fishing expedition in Muslim waters. As Act II moves inside the prison camp, and actors in orange jumpsuits deliver increasingly desperate words taken from their letters home, the play's subtitle acquires even more pungent irony: "Honor Bound to Defend Freedom" comes from a sign over the camp, reminding American officers of their duty there. Act III centers on the release of two of the men and on Moazzem Begg's apparent mental disintegration. Along with these personal stories, monologues by human rights attorneys and sympathetic politicians provide scathing critiques and legal analysis. (And occasionally platitudinous justification is pronounced by the likes of Donald Rumsfeld, played with perfectly pompous bravado by Robert Langdon Lloyd.)

These critical commentaries baldly—and rightly—state that Guantánamo embodies the Bush Administration's imperious disregard for the Geneva Conventions, other international human rights instruments, the Constitution and even the separation of powers. But these conclusions are asserted, not dramatized through a complex theatrical experience that might allow audiences—especially in the United States—to

Alisa Solomon, a journalist and theater critic in New York, is a professor at the City University of New York.

confront the extremism of our government and our ambivalent responses to our own fear. Since September 11 many liberals have felt understandably divided between their commitment to civil liberties and their concerns about security.

It's a pity *Guantánamo* fails to explore these tensions, because documentary theater possesses exactly the means to both engage us emotionally and give us a cold look at our relationship to historical events. Think of the way Nazi rhetoric's material power becomes the terrifying subject of Peter Weiss's *The Investigation*, the 1965 play based on the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, how the Vietnam War comes intimately home in Emily Mann's *Still Life* (1980) or how the competing meanings made of the Crown Heights conflict of 1991 in Anna Deavere Smith's *Fires in the Mirror* (1993) reveal the disparities in lives and interpretive realities of Brooklyn neighbors.

If these works display a festering wound for inspection while *Guantánamo* invites us simply to feel the sting, the difference comes not just from the fact that the earlier pieces look back on irresolvable past occurrences while *Guantánamo* grapples with an ongoing crisis. It comes from style.

Guantánamo's principal mechanism is identification. The painstaking and painful detail with which it describes individual shattered lives humanizes the detainees, rescuing them from orange-jumpsuit anonymity and, more urgently, from the subhuman category of "terrorist." We hear of their boyhood pranks and adolescent ideals, listen as they pine for their children and express loving concern for their parents. We see them brutally shoved and chained into cramped postures. We watch them go mad with boredom and fear. This is no small thing at a time when Muslim men are caricatured and demonized in mass media, not to mention in real life. Though the stage presents several simultaneous realities—the camp's wire cages and their hard beds share space with tables and chairs for Mr. Begg and Wahab and other characters from the outside—the acting is highly representational. As in sentimental naturalism, the actors fully embody the characters, plaintively emoting and pouring on the pathos.

The trouble is, this aesthetic choice in both the selection of "spoken evidence" and in the direction (by Nicholas Kent and Sacha Wares) contributes to a conflation between the detainees' essential humanity and their presumed innocence, as if the one depended on the other, and as if the former were proof of the latter. By depicting their "humanity" in such a poignant fashion, the play almost inclines us to view them as in-

nocent, even if they're not. The play never directly states that those who have not been released are not fundamentalist extremists who were preparing to commit violence (though one way or another all the detained characters assert that they do not belong in the camp). But it creates—and banks on—the impression that all are regular guys who never did anything wrong. Maybe they didn't. The difficult point is, that shouldn't matter. It's easy to condemn the United States for denying due process and human rights to men above suspicion, and condemned it should be. *Guantánamo* never challenges us to support such rights for men who may, in fact, be guilty.

In this respect, as in others, the play closely resembles the documentary performance that ran at the Culture Project from 2002 until earlier this year, *The Exonerated*. Assembled by playwrights Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen from interviews with six people exonerated from death row, along with passages from their astonishingly slipshod trials, the play carries us through each one's arrest, belligerent interrogation, trial, dreadful years (as many as twenty-two) on death row and then their bleakly incomplete reintegration into civilian life. Again, opposing the death penalty for people who committed no crime is, to say the least, a no-brainer. But *The Exonerated* does more than evoke sympathy for the wrongly convicted. Indeed, the overlapping stories of one botch and bungle after another amass into a larger critique of a criminal justice system gone out of control as it criminalizes the poor.

One way *The Exonerated* shifts the emphasis to the system is by using a starkly presentational style: Actors (among them celebrities like Judy Collins, Richard Dreyfuss and Alanis Morissette) sit on stools in a row across the stage, their scripts perched in front of them on music stands. They read with affect, but never get mawkish. Like the formalism of Peter Weiss's play, the disjunction among the three characters in Emily Mann's and the mediating presence of Anna Deavere Smith beneath all the characters she portrays, this approach signals audiences that empathy is not the only thing the play is after. (The Culture Project is borrowing at least a marketing ploy from its earlier success: Desmond Tutu is taking a turn as Lord Steyn in *Guantánamo*.)

In the New York context, at least, one *Guantánamo* character seems to stand in for the audience: Tom Clark, the brother of a woman murdered on 9/11 while at work at the World Trade Center. Like his sister, who, he tells us, "would have been incensed" about "this Guantánamo thing," Clark is a liberal who "genuinely care[s] about the

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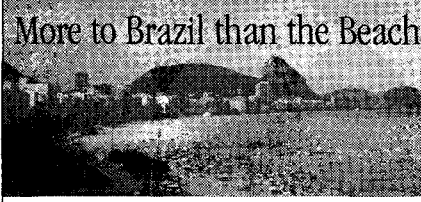
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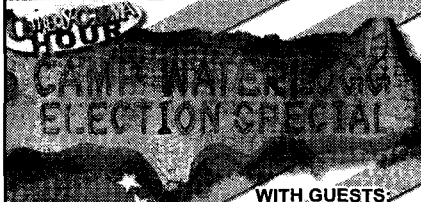


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Middle East." And he is incensed, "furious at the length of detention of these people, furious because those who are innocent have been, have lost three years of their life, much like you know I lost.... I can't imagine a worse thing for any person." But "the people who led to her death"? Clark is clear: "Yeh.

Lock 'em up. Throw away the key."

Sure. But even in our identification with Clark, we might still believe in due process. How to compass that possibility, emotionally and politically, is what we might have practiced in a less sentimental, more shaded *Guantánamo*. ■

FILMS

In the Cut

STUART KLAWANS

MOOLAADÉ • VERA DRAKE

Throughout the four decades of his great career—which is the same thing as saying, throughout the history of filmmaking in sub-Saharan Africa—Ousmane Sembene has switched back and forth between urban and rural settings, historic and contemporary subjects, as if striving to encapsulate the whole of his

continent's experience. Most recently, in *Faat Kiné*, he dramatized the entrepreneurial and familial struggles of a Dakar woman, who had worked her way up into the middle class by running a gas station. His new film, *Moolaadé*, focuses instead on a village far from any paved roads, where women still draw water from a well and news travels by drum. From your first view of the dried-mud architecture—the round granaries set on foundations of round stones, the mosque with its stringy towers sticking up like an anthill's peaks—you understand you're in a place bound by tradition. Yet this place is also permeable to modernity, which enters the movie as soon as you do.

The first images in *Moolaadé* show the arrival of a peddler known as Mercenaire (Dominique T. Zeïda), who wheels into the village a bicycle cart laden with store-made clothes, bakery bread, bright-colored plastic housewares and the most prized item of all: alkaline batteries.

Another intrusion of modernity follows immediately, even as Mercenaire sets out his wares. Into one of the village's compounds dash four skinny little girls dressed in nothing but blue shorts. Weeping and gasping, they beg for sanctuary from Collé (Fatoumata Coulibaly), who is the second of this household's three wives. The children understand that she alone might take pity on them, now that they have run away from the rite their elders call "purification." The girls have a more basic name for it: "getting cut."

I see, though, that my summary has oversimplified the situation—an easy error to make, under the spell of Sembene's effort-

less storytelling. Despite what I just said about modernity, these small girls do not yet think in terms of rejecting tradition. What they're refusing is pain. As for the oval-faced, heavy-lidded Collé, whose forceful movements contrast strikingly with her bird-in-flight smile: Although she once set a bad example about genital cutting, years ago, she has never encouraged anyone to rebel. If she now provides the girls with ritual protection—*moolaadé*—it's mostly because she can't bear to turn away frightened children. She is acting for the moment on gut instinct. (I mean that literally; Sembene will show you the scars on her belly.) It takes the rest of the film—a two-hour stand-off between Collé and the girls on one side, the village elders and wise women on the other—to turn impromptu defiance into a conscious break with the past.

The siege at Collé's compound is only the latest such confrontation that Sembene has imagined. In films as different as *Black Girl*, *Ceddo*, *Guelwaar* and *The Camp at Thiaroyé*, he has locked his conflicting characters into situations with no apparent exit. It's his favorite plot device; and so one measure of his skill as a filmmaker is the fact that nobody walks out of his movies complaining of claustrophobia. His audiences speak instead of vivid performers, textured settings, cadenced actions, the pulse of daily life.

Moolaadé finds the octogenarian Sembene near the top of his form. The film plays like a musical composition, in relaxed tempo, made up in large part of ceremonious greetings, domestic chores, communal debates and marketplace transactions. Even

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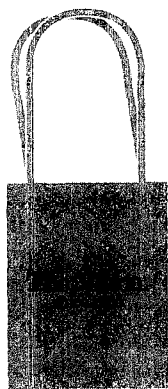
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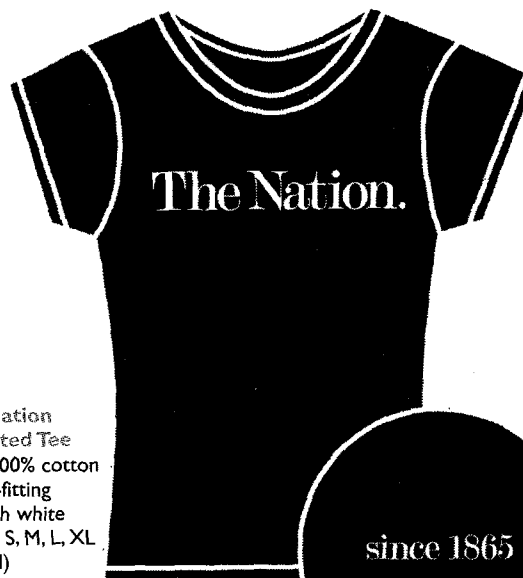


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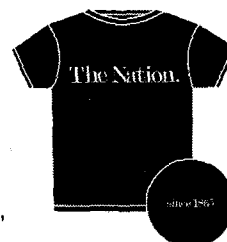
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while the villagers struggle in deadly earnest with their traditions, they keep on milling the grain, pumping the water, teaching an off-camera group of boys to chant the Koran. Interrupting this normal flow, though, are sudden narrative accents: an outburst of violence, or the comic spectacle of someone stepping awkwardly over the ritual barrier to Collé's compound. Through his rhythms, Sembene makes these moments seem as natural, as open to the sky, as the village itself—although there's finally not much that's naturalistic about them. Charmer, pedagogue and symbol-maker, Sembene pays attention to such quotidian details not just for their own sake but to build up images, which can be as telling, and improbable, as the burning radios he heaps up in *Moolaadé*, leaving them squawking to different stations as they smolder next to the mosque.

Without such images, of course, the subject matter of *Moolaadé* would approach the unbearable. Only once in the film, and then only for a moment, does Sembene directly dramatize the terror of a little girl about to be cut. For a more extended dramatization, he translates this horror out of the realm of childhood mutilation and into a confrontation between adults—Collé and her husband—who face off before the entire village like two allegorical figures: moral force versus baffled, exasperated brutality.

Sembene knows the high cost of that contest, and he does not flinch from showing it; but he has paid a price of his own, on his way from fisherman's son and dockworker to Father of African Cinema, and so he also knows which side must win, if the viewers of his story are to go forward with their own lives. The siege ends, the captives go free, lovers unite and a new generation steps forward, led by little children. It's as profoundly mythic a liberation as you will find in the words of the prophet Isaiah.

It's so modern that it ends with the raising of a TV antenna.

Like Leigh's new film, *Vera Drake*, bears a surface resemblance to *Moolaadé* in that both were shown in this year's New York Film Festival and both are about a helpful married woman who defies the control that men exercise over women's bodies. Set in London in 1950, Leigh's film is the story of a wife, mother and cleaning woman (Imelda Staunton) who is always waddling cheerfully up the staircases of dingy brick apartment compounds, sometimes to serve tea to a handicapped neighbor and sometimes to perform an abortion. The word for her method, I believe, is "dodgy." Vera forces soapy water up her patients' bodies, explaining that in a day or so the bleeding will come. Then she leaves,

providing nothing in the way of postoperative care beyond a sincere smile and a reassuring pat. Given the state of English law in 1950 and her patients' resources, it's as good as these women can get. If Vera could give more, we have no doubt she'd do it.

Always humming little tunes, always puffing busily and keeping her chin up, Vera initially seems, in Staunton's performance, like some hard-working family's beloved little dog, no longer young but still bright-eyed and eager to please. This raises a question: Does Leigh like Vera?

I'm sure he prefers her to the rich women she serves, who come off like unfunny stick figures, lacking the sensitive, lifelike modeling that a Ken Loach, say, might have given them. But to say that Leigh despises one class is not to say he admires another. Early in the film, he has Vera and her family engage in a long, detailed conversation about the recent war, one purpose of which is to establish a cozy sense of English solidarity. Generous, uncomplaining Vera is a ridiculously improbable character, unless you see her as exemplifying the belief that we're all in this together, and we'll pull each other through.

That, more than the harm done by anti-abortion laws, is the real subject of the movie: the chummy ethos that animates Vera. As far as Leigh is concerned, it's a worldview fit for idiots.

Look at how dull a character Vera is, when she's at liberty and helping others. Look at how she becomes more compelling, and the film much more interesting, as soon as she's arrested and her suffering begins. (You know, of course, she's going to be nabbed. You wait for it, and wait.) It's not just that Staunton's tears are varied, while her smiles are not. The difference is that consciousness begins to light up in dim Vera, the consciousness that her abundant kindness can be fatal.

I explain all this in order to put the best possible construction on *Vera Drake*. You can take the film as an act of termitelike subversion, in which Leigh gnaws away from the inside at a popular conception of English virtue; or else you can take the film at face value as an exposé of the bad old days, in which case it plays like a one-block-long trip down a one-way street.

In case the pro-choice film is the one you were hoping to see, allow me to recommend a visit to the video store, for Claude Chabrol's *Story of Women*.

Short Takes: Self-congratulatory, showbiz-addled and not half as good as *Finding Nemo*, the new underwater animation *Shark Tale* will nevertheless delight small children, although it probably will amuse their parents more. If your small

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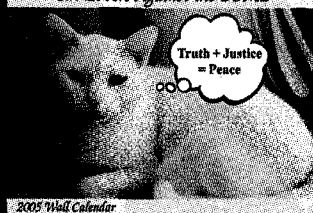
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moviegoer can quote lines from *Jerry Maguire*, knows who MC Hammer used to be and cares that Martin Scorsese is now working as a voiceover actor opposite Robert De Niro, then the kid will savor the whole picture—and can probably get you in as a guest at the next Screen Actors Guild showing. Lacking the company of such a child, you might still go on your own. The animation is often delightful—as when, for example, the hustling little fish Oscar (voice of Will Smith) sits on the edge of the desk of Angie (voice of Renée Zellweger) and incidentally tips over her Rolodex, which takes the form of a seashell. I also like the film's theme of tolerance. A tough shark family must learn to accept young Lenny (voice of Jack Black), even though he's "different." The problem, according to the script, is that he's a vegetarian; but since he also speaks in a lilting voice, wears a scarf and changes his name to Sebastian, you can make up your own interpretation.

I cannot recommend the new documentary *Arna's Children* for its filmmaking (which is adequate, though nothing more) or its political analysis (which is nil). But if you can find this THINKFilm release, which recently began a theatrical run at New York City's Quad Cinema, you may find it important and unforgettable as raw information. Directed by Juliano Mer Khamis and Danniell Danniell, it is the story of a handful of young people in the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank. You see them when they are about 10 or 11 years old and participating in a theater workshop, established in Jenin by Juliano's late mother, the Jewish activist Arna Mer Khamis; and you see them again at around age 20, by which time they are engaged in gun battles with Israeli troops or, in one case, preparing to carry out a suicide bombing. This harrowing material cries out for context, reflection, argument, judgment, which is not forthcoming from the filmmakers. Mer Khamis and Danniell would rather maintain the illusion that facts speak for themselves—as if Hamas and Likud couldn't both make use of this footage. You, however, are a *Nation* reader. The filmmakers can trust you with this data.

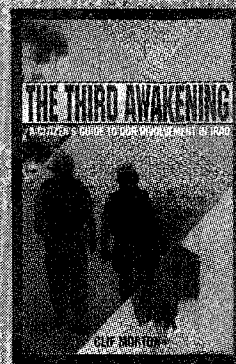
Finally, on the subject of data: Antonio Muntadas and Marshall Reese have assembled the 2004 edition of their ongoing project, *Political Advertisement*, and will be showing it in various cities before the November election. In New York, the screening will take place at 6 PM on October 28 at the Donnell Media Center, introduced by the artists and Mark Crispin Miller. The one-hour video spans fifty years of TV ads for presidential candidates, from Ike to John Kerry, presented without commentary. Information: (212) 621-0609. ■

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EASTERN OKLAHOMA NATION DISCUSSION GROUP looking for members. Please contact Howard Kelley at (918) 627-9136.

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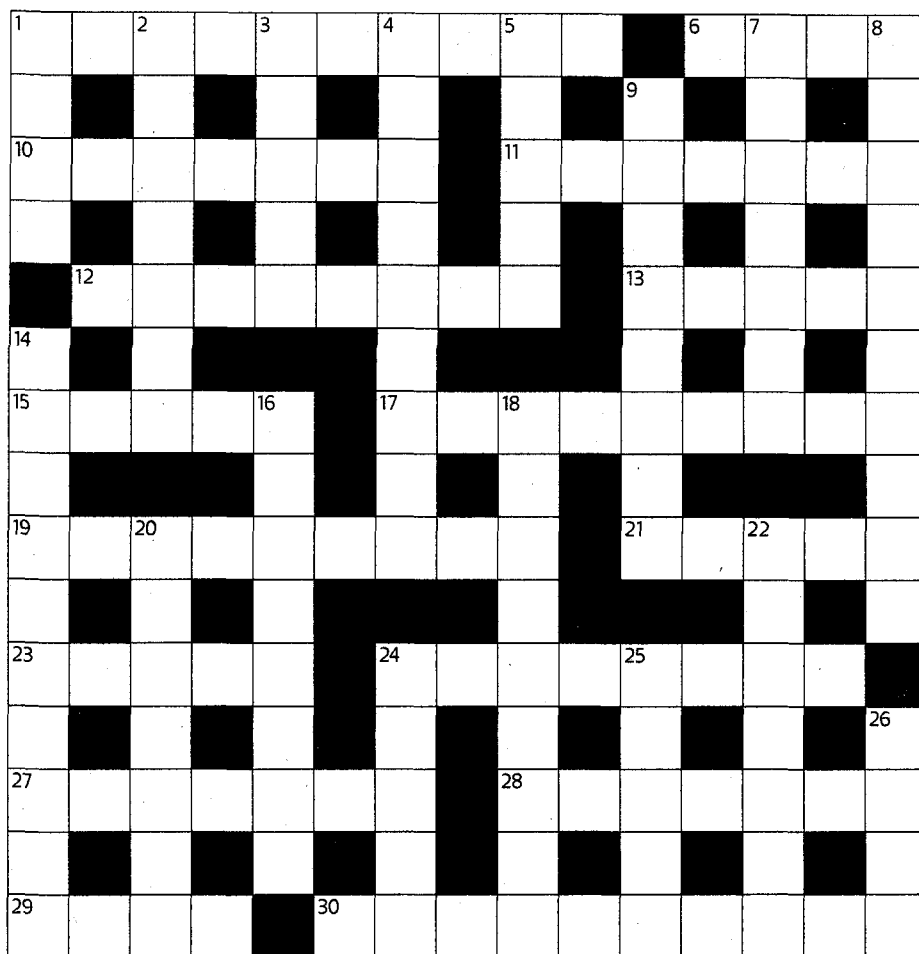
FRANK W. LEWIS

ACROSS

- 1 Not able to read or write, perhaps—and therefore hasn't won his H for Harvard. (10)
- 6 and 26 down The first man to be of the French version according to Eliot. (4,4)
- 10 Flying around the world, you see what might be born when I begin to see it at the end. (2,5)
- 11 Start the tune in an outside environment. (4,3)
- 12 Perhaps look for a handout, when one hears you may be surrounded by crazed congers. (8)
- 13 A neutral vowel sound made by starting school with a wacky head. (5)
- 15 and 17 Mr. Hood, with a brightly colored chest holding something you might find in a tree. (5,9)
- 19 This has to be considered early in the day. (Did Mom say a disapproving word in a loggerhead?) (9)
- 21 One who had the power of prophesy by finding half-silver around it? (5)
- 23 A temporary suspension of breathing an ape might be troubled by. (5)
- 24 Perhaps found in old bands, however in paper bags here. (8)
- 27 The painter who showed a measure of power, taking the water in Paris. (7)
- 28 Where a bishop might be on the job, to be watching what happens. (7)
- 29 and 30 How fast things get swapped! That shows how much your money is worth, someplace else! (4,2,8)

DOWN

- 1 You might find this one has the heart trouble of 19. (4)
- 2 Little Leo ties one on in the wrong social establishment... (4,3)
- 3 ... and what you might have to pay there having nothing—nothing at all, which may not be allowed! (5)
- 4 It's supposedly bad manners to take something in, then make tracks. (3,3,3)
- 5 What a runaway pair might do—and crazy people lose their head! (5)



7 Proving the legal official gets mixed up with the sort of charm that makes money! (7)

8 Pertaining to trade with the French sea on one hand and a little French land on the other, unable to be in the middle. (10)

9 Severely criticizes someone to make him behave, being certain to have the census around it, though we get left out! (8)

14 Such hostility started with evil-doing, ending up with an article on the fighting. (7,3)

16 Shells? They're really crazy! (3-5)

18 Painter of the cross, according to Parisians. (9)

20 A wee one, either in the crib or at the bar. (4,3)

22 However tins are dented, one intrudes if one does. (5,2)

24 If you are up to it, it's perfectly OK! (5)

25 Tree that sounds as though it belongs near the ocean. (5)

26 See 6 across

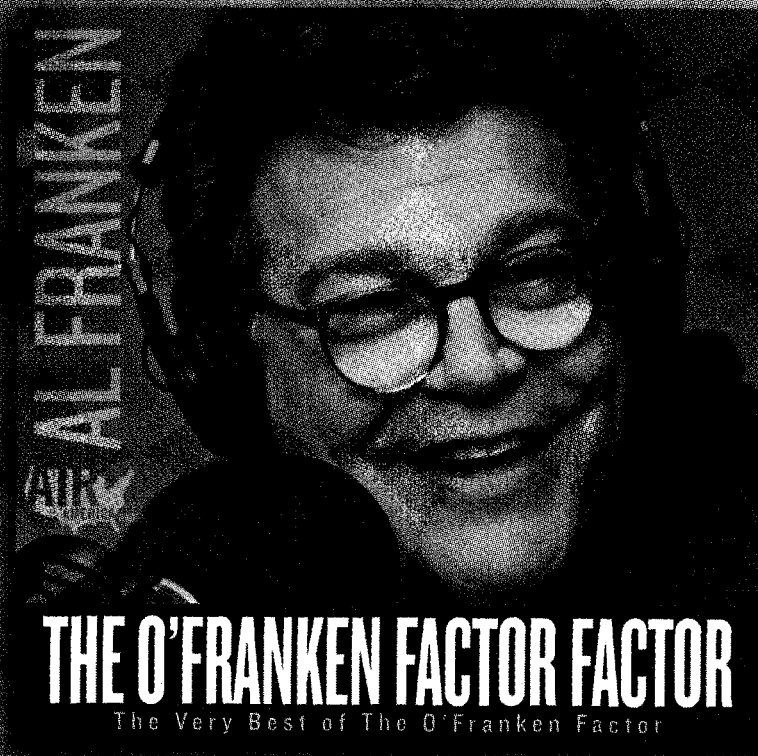
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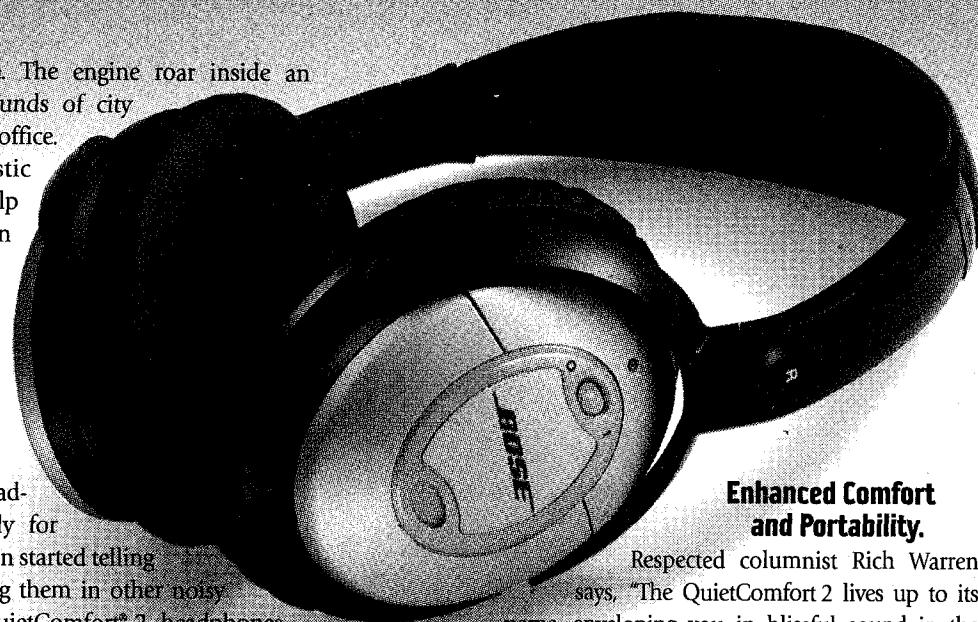
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